



BUMPER ISSUE

32
extra
pages!

**Why Judy's heading
off to the jungle!**

best

17 NOVEMBER 2015 ISSUE 45

**Christmas
countdown**



47
festive
foods
on test



Perfect
party fashion



**It's a
wrap!**

Fab fizz
for less

Carol Vorderman's fears

**I'M GETTING
TOO OLD
FOR TV**



EAMONN

**Work's
going to
KILL ME!**



**My sperm donor baby
healed my heartache**



**FED UP
ANTHEA**

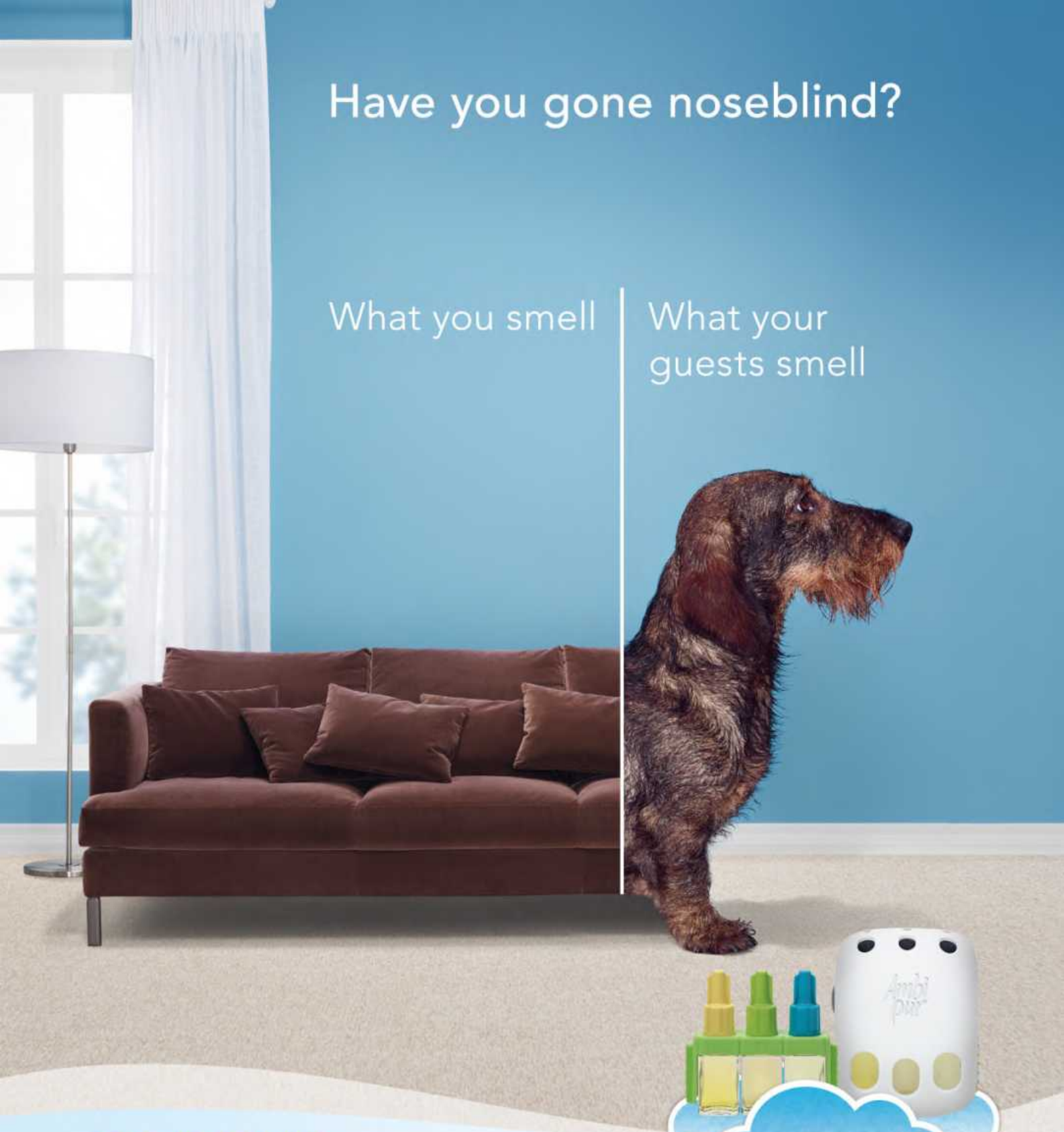
**I know
how Bridget
Jones feels**



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What you smell

What your
guests smell



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best Contents

Festive food without the fuss

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THE news edit



Suranne returns
as Dr Foster
(below, with
cheating hubby
Simon)



1 DOCTOR FOSTER WILL SEE YOU AGAIN

SURANNE JONES IS SET TO REPRIS her role as wronged wife GP Gemma Foster, in BBC One's hit series *Doctor Foster*.

'I'm thrilled, I can't wait for the explosive twists,' says the 37-year-old actress. 'Now we can look into what happens to a woman after divorce, deceit and revenge has taken its toll.'

Newlywed Suranne is one busy lady, having this week returned to filming a three-part special of cop drama *Scott & Bailey*, with co-star Lesley Sharp, appearing on screens early next year. We can't wait!

Best of British:
Romeo Beckham
does Billy Elliot



BURBERRY IT LIKE BECKHAM

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BRAVO TO BURBERRY for cramming so many celebs into its new festive ad campaign. With Romeo Beckham, 13, as the lead star, the three-minute advert is an ode to classic film *Billy Elliot* in honour of its 15th anniversary. *Downton Abbey* star Michelle Dockery is joined by Julie Walters, James Corden, Naomi Campbell and Elton John, who dress up in the brand's iconic scarves and recreate the famous opening jumping sequence from the film. And in the season of goodwill, the British fashion brand has donated £500,000 to charities in County Durham, where the film was set: Place2Be and the County Durham Community Foundation. It's sure to put a spring in your step this Christmas.



WHY DAME JOAN WANTS TO BE A BOND VILLAIN

MILLIONS OF US HAVE BEEN GRIPPED BY James Bond in *Spectre*, including Dame Joan Collins.

'I enjoyed it, but I did find it quite violent,' admits the 82-year-old actress, who also reveals that she turned down the chance to play a Bond girl.

'I was asked twice, the first time was for *Goldfinger* but I didn't fancy being painted gold. I often think it was a pity I didn't go for it as it would have been iconic,' she recalls. 'The second time I was expecting one of my children. But I'd love to be a Bond villain, too, a bitchy Bond baddie.'

Fans of Joan in 'bitchy mode' could be in for a treat, as demand grows for a revival of Eighties soap *Dynasty*, with Joan as glamorous-but-evil Alexis.

'Stephanie Beacham, Emma Samms and I would be more than happy to do it; we're always talking about it!' she laughs.

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'I've been expecting you, Mr Bond!' Joan would love to go up against 007

She is also publishing her sixth book, *The St Tropez Lonely Hearts Club*, a whodunnit set on the French Riviera, dedicated to her late sister Jackie who died in September, adding, 'I thought the story up three or four years ago as I've been going to St Tropez since the Seventies.'

Joan admits to crying up to four times a day since Jackie's death from cancer, and is prouder than ever of her little sister.

'Even when she found out seven years ago that she had cancer, she went on to write five books. She got another one ready before she passed, called *Jackie Collins' Hollywood*. It's a book of photographs she accumulated since the Sixties.'

IS THAT A MINI GUINNESS?

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ONLY JOKING! HOLLYWOOD HUNK GEORGE CLOONEY IS TEACHING DANNY DEVITO TO

DRINK COFFEE, not booze, in a new Nespresso ad. We're used to seeing gorgeous George, 54, front the famous coffee brand, but now pint-sized funnyman Danny, 70, is on board we think the ads can only get better! The first one will air in the US, and we can't wait for them to come over here.



Coffee? Definitely, if George is asking... sorry, Danny!



Downton's Michelle also gets to bounce in her Burberry

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A WREATH THAT WOWS!

OUR USUAL CHOCOLATE OF CHOICE might be a little redundant this Christmas. Why? We've just discovered this stunning, show-stopping centrepiece from Hotel Chocolat. Available in white, dark and - our favourite - milk, the chocolate wreath comes studded with shortbread and caramelised Florentine squares. Rich, decadent and delish! Available in small (£7) or large (£20).



COMPILED BY: DEIRDRE O'BRIEN, LARA NUGENT, HELEN PIKE PICTURES: DRAMA REPUBLIC, GETTY IMAGES, MIRRORPIX, XPOSURE

IS JUDY FOR THE JUNGLE?

RICHARD AND JUDY WERE BOOKED ON A FLIGHT TO OZ LAST WEEK. 'It's definite,' a source tells *Best*. 'They left on 4 November.'

Could it be that one of the Madeley clan is to appear in Sunday's *I'm A Celebrity... Get Me Out Of Here!*?

This summer, Richard, 59, was snapped showing off his tanned, toned torso in France, while daughter Chloe, 28, is known for her super levels of fitness.

Meanwhile, publicity-shy Judy Finnigan, 67, has made it clear that she has little interest in going back on TV for any length of time, and her knees have given her trouble on and off for years.

No, we just can't see it being Judy, but we can see her there to support her family and enjoy a lovely time in the Palazzo Versace hotel on Australia's Gold Coast, catching up with Ant and Dec.

Is Richard there for ITV2's *Get Me Out of Here Now!*? Or perhaps the couple are simply off on holiday. Whatever the reason, what better place than sunny Oz to avoid a wet British November?



Are Richard and Judy set for the bushtucker trials?



The Boots calendar is always a best-seller



M&S has outdone itself with this bargain

CALORIE-FREE CALENDARS

IS THIS THE MOST BEAUTIFUL COUNTDOWN TO CHRISTMAS EVER?

Our waistbands will be strained throughout the festive season, so we might as well switch our chocolate calendar for one filled with beauty treats.

If you spend £25 in the beauty section at Marks & Spencer you can pick up its **Beauty Advent Calendar** for another £25. When the value of what

you find inside is worth over £200, it's a no-brainer.

And Boots is back with its best-selling calendar featuring mini- and full-size skincare and make-up. It's worth £148, but you can snap it up for £38.

With a nod to the 12 days of Christmas, the **Avon Nail Selection Box, £55** (on sale 12 November) contains a dozen full-size bottles, worth £78, for you to deck your talons as you please.



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BRATZ HAVE THE X FACTOR

SIMON COWELL HAS FINALLY BEEN TURNED INTO A DOLL, thanks to toy company Bratz, which has immortalised the music mogul and his fellow *X Factor* judges, Cheryl Fernandez-Versini, 32, Rita Ora, 24, and Nick Grimshaw, 31, into plastic figurines. The Simon doll is dressed in his trademark open white shirt and skin-tight black jeans, but looks suspiciously younger than his 56 years. We think they should sell them... put us down for a Simon!



There's no excuse not to paint your nails now, thanks to Avon

ANT'S BABY STRUGGLE

HE'S ONE OF OUR MOST FAMOUS AND MUCH-LOVED TELLY FACES, and he's happily married to his childhood sweetheart, but there's one thing *I'm A Celebrity...* presenter Ant McPartlin longs for - a baby.

Ant wed make-up artist Lisa Armstrong 10 years ago, but the couple have yet to start a family. Ant, currently in Australia filming the ITV jungle reality show, is 40 next week, and fears age may be against him.

There was a rumour that he was holding off having kids until TV partner Dec Donnelly - who is now settled with his manager wife, Ali Astall, 37 - had found himself Mrs Right, but Ant has dismissed it. 'I love that idea, but I'm afraid it's not true. Lisa and I would love to have kids, we're trying. It's just tougher when you're older,' he said.

Lisa, 39, works on high-profile shows including *Strictly Come*



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Dancing and, with Ant's work on programmes like *Saturday Night Takeaway* and *Britain's Got Talent*, the couple have packed schedules. 'We've wanted children for a while, but we're both so busy,' he admitted.

'We definitely want to start a family soon - fingers crossed it will happen naturally.'

We hope Ant and Lisa hear the pitter-patter of tiny feet soon!

See how they **GROW!**

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GEORDIE SINGER STING, 64, WAS AN ENGLISHMAN

in New York last week when he enjoyed a night out, partying with the eldest of his four children, daughter Mickey, 31, at the Lunchbox Fund Gala.

Blonde Mickey has followed in mum Trudie Styler's footsteps and works as an actress, recently appearing on Broadway. Talent, as well as good looks, definitely runs in the family!



My mum's dying wish

Angelina Jolie on mum Marcheline's secret pact to ensure her daughter doesn't succumb to cancer too

When Marcheline Bertrand, Angelina Jolie's mother, died at 56 from ovarian cancer, she made one last wish on her deathbed. She

wanted to make sure that what was killing her would not touch her daughter. So she insisted her surgeon make the promise that, when the time came, she would save her child's life.

A tearful Angelina said, 'We had some of the same doctors and nurses. So the doctor that performed my ovarian surgery was my mum's doctor. Apparently, my mother had said to her, "Promise me you will take Angie's ovaries out."'

'So, when we got together, we both had a big cry, and [the surgeon] told me, "I promised your mother, and I gotta do this."'

Angelina, 40, set to star in a new film, *By The Sea*, co-starring husband Brad Pitt, said it was during filming that a blood test revealed she had probable signs of early-stage ovarian cancer. Ironically, the film is about a married couple facing difficulties.

After talking to surgeons,

and to Brad, the mum-of-six had her ovaries and fallopian tubes removed.

The scare came just two years after Angelina had a double mastectomy.

As a carrier of the BRCA1 cancer gene, she had an 87 per cent chance of contracting breast cancer.

The star explained her decision as being

down to 'wanting the chance of seeing my grandchildren grow up'.

Brad was on location in France when Angelina received the shock news of her new health scare.

'Angie called me and I got straight on a plane,' he said. 'Seeing my wife having to be at her strongest, and knowing that it was the scariest news, was terribly moving. And not being there was a horrible feeling.'

Brad, 51, added that there was 'no vanity to my wife's approach.'

'It was mature and we're going to make the best of it,'



Brad supported his wife's decision

'It's about wanting the chance to see my grandchildren grow up'

he said. 'There's a strength in that.'

Angelina's surgery brought on an immediate menopause.

'I didn't know how I'd feel,' she said.

'I knew the mastectomy

would be a big surgery. With ovarian surgery, your hormones are changing; emotions changing...'

Brad has done all he can

to support Angie and the kids - Maddox, 14, Pax, 11, and Zahara, 10, plus Shiloh, nine, and twins Knox and Vivienne, seven.

'It was just another of those things in life that makes you tighter, and she was doing it for the children and for our family,' he said.

Angelina added touchingly, 'Brad made clear what a woman was to him - someone smart and capable who cared about her family. It's not about your physical body. He was there for me.'



Her young family is Angelina's first priority



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I'm getting too old for TV

She's 55 on Christmas Eve, and now Carol Vorderman says it's almost time for the 'saggy-bellied mum of two' to throw in the towel on her TV career

It's been 33 years since Carol Vorderman's debut on Channel 4's *Countdown*, alongside the show's late host, Richard Whiteley, and the fresh-faced 21-year-old bears little resemblance to the blonde bombshell we see today.

Just last Monday, she tweeted a picture of her first day on set, mocking her noticeably different younger self – paying close attention to her hair.

She added the message, 'Funny shot. Had been in the TV make-up room and they'd done my hair in rollers like I was my mum. I was too shy to object!'

Fans were quick to reassure her, with lovely comments like, 'You're not old enough to have been on TV in 1982!'

But, while Carol may not look her age, the maths genius who made a

career from her talent for numbers – and her knockout figure – is now 54.

Following her controversial exit from *Countdown* in 2008 over a 90 per cent pay cut, it took Carol almost three years to return to daytime TV. But, within months of taking up her seat as a *Loose Women* panellist, she was making headlines again. This time, there was speculation that she'd gone under the knife.

The newly qualified pilot denied the rumours. 'I'm not up for plastic surgery,' she retorted. 'I find people's obsession with age quite funny. I think if you do anything on your face, you're taking a risk. I've still got wrinkles.'

That said, her personal style certainly saw a few nips and tucks. Cutting a dash in figure-hugging outfits, she became the face of isme.com in 2013. Her fashion range sold out in 24 hours, and Carol turned into a poster girl for the over-fifties. But, when isme stopped

'Fashion just isn't one of my things. I'm a geek'

trading this summer, she remained unfazed.

Her plans to fly around the world solo early next year are taking up most of

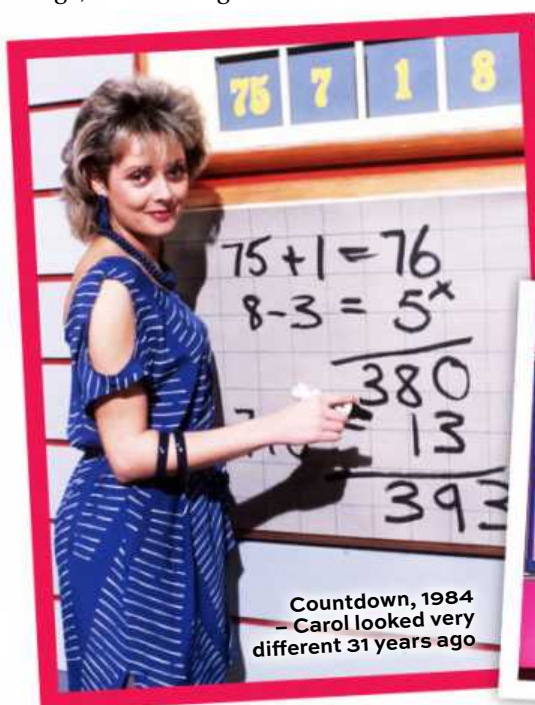
her free time, so it seems unlikely the *Pride of Britain Awards* presenter will be looking to model a new fashion range just yet.

'I like my clothes tight – baggy items really annoy me,' she said. 'But fashion isn't one of my things. What really gets me going is a space shuttle take-off! My adrenaline runs wild even thinking about it. But dresses... move on. I'm a geek.'

Like many middle-aged women, Carol is now reassessing her life. She's decided she wants to spend less time working and more time focusing on things that really matter to her – her 87-year-old mum, Jean, and her children, Katie, 23, and Cameron, 18. She's also setting up



Focusing on her family – mum Jean, son Cameron and daughtie Katie



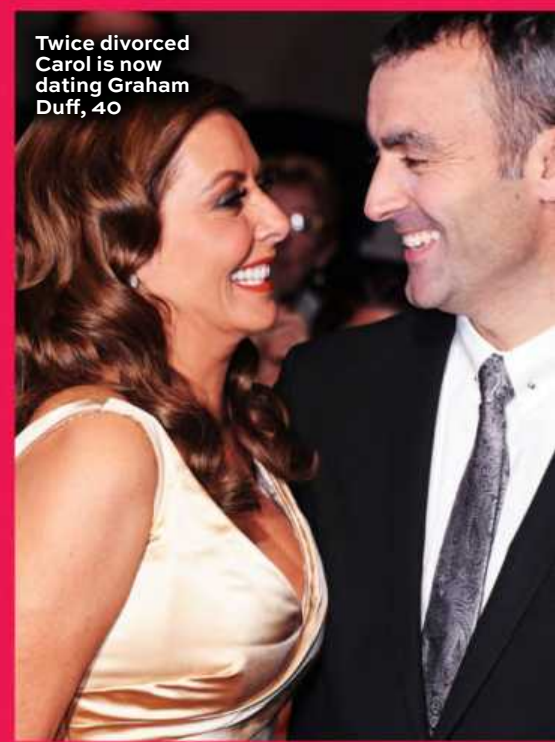
Countdown, 1984 – Carol looked very different 31 years ago



Her last appearance on the legendary daytime show



Twice divorced
Carol is now
dating Graham
Duff, 40



The Maths Factor, a new online maths programme to help kids who are struggling with numbers at school.

'Maths is my business and this was my ultimate dream,' she said.

'I took a conscious decision to come off *Loose Women* because I wanted to do the piloting and I don't do TV anywhere near as much. You just get to an age, really. I'm 55 in December and, no matter how many people tell you that you look great, you're still getting older.'

The star added, 'There are just more important things in life than sitting in a studio talking to Janet Street-Porter.'

Carol, voted 'Rear of the Year' in 2014, has been referring to herself as a 'saggy-bellied mother of two'. Who knew? And she's admitted that her pilot training is increasingly tough. Just two months ago, she fell off her treadmill.

'I got back on, but I forgot I'd left the belt running at more than six miles an hour! So now I've done my back in, and my knee, and I'm covered in bruises!'

But, while keeping fit may be getting harder and image may no longer be a top priority, there's one exception.

'Of course I dye my hair. I prefer not to go grey!' she has said.

Quite right, Carol. With a boyfriend 14 years your junior (Graham 'Duffy' Duff), an RAF squadron leader to boot, a girl can't let all her standards slip!

WORDS: HARRIET NOTTON PICTURES: MIRRORPIX, REX FEATURES, WENN



Cowell Confidential

Tony Cowell, Best columnist and brother of Simon, talks showbiz

IS THE SMART MONEY ON *Louisa?*

The X Factor's **LOUISA JOHNSON** has been tipped to win the show. Tony goes backstage to chat to the singer...

You are now the favourite to win – does that put you under more pressure?

I don't really look at it like that. I just try and stay focused on me and improving each week I'm trying to learn as much as I can, especially from my mentor, Rita.

When you sang the Beach Boys' classic, *God Only*

Knows, you weren't familiar with the song. How did you connect with it so well?

When I saw the lyrics, I began to understand what the song was all about. I was nervous, but as soon as I started singing, I connected with the song. I am trying to work on my nerves because I know I have to. ▶

I'd love to perform an original song on the show'

NERVOUS SIMON'S AWARD



One Direction presented Simon with his award

YOUTUBE/@MUSICINDUSTRYTRUST

Simon told me he wasn't looking forward to receiving his Music Industry Trust award in London last week. He said, 'Normally I hate these kind of award ceremonies and I was terrified of going up on stage alone, but I knew I had to honour Mum and Dad because they would have been so proud of me. It was emotional, but I wanted to do it for their memory.'



A standing ovation for the show's youngest contestant



gives me a lot of confidence. I know I need to work on my confidence and Rita is really helping me with that. **You recently split from your boyfriend, Ellis – has that affected you at all?**

Not really, because we still talk. We are mates and he is very supportive of me being on the show.

If you make the final, who would you like to duet with?

I would probably say either Beyoncé or Christina Aguilera. I think that would be awesome. But I still have to make the final yet.

They miss me a lot but know this is what I want to

do. They come to every live show to see me and I need that support.

How do you get on with your mentor, Rita?

Really well. We have the same taste in music and she

Simon tells me he is a big fan of yours, and called you 'phenomenal'. Do you write your own songs?

I do, but I think writing is a lot to do with experience and I'm still so young so I think there is definitely more to come. I'd love to perform an original song on the show.

What's it like living with the other contestants in The X Factor house?

It's really fun, but it's quite hard to get in the bathroom in the morning because I share with the girls. We all get on really well. The overs tend to be like my adopted parents, they look after me. I'm a bit

sad that Bupsi has gone because she was like a second mum to me. I really miss her.

How supportive have your own family been through this whole process?

They have been very understanding because they know I can't phone them all the time.

CHERYL V RITA

Who has the fashion factor?

For the first time on the show it seems like the girls aren't competing and are going for completely different looks, showcasing their individual styles.

Cheryl has stuck with sleek and sexy and opted to show off her abs and legs, while Rita has contrasted couture with asymmetric angles. No one could have predicted how outlandish Rita's choices are, but if anyone can pull off edgy, appliqué thigh-boots, it's this girl!

However, the ladies aren't the only fashionistas on the panel this series... Front row favourite, Nick Grimshaw, was voted GQ's Best Dressed Man last year, and he has channelled his look into a debut collection for Topshop... Hopefully he'll give Simon some style tips.



Equally stylish, it's love all in the fashion wars

(Left to right) Kiera Weathers, Louisa, former contestant Havva Rebke and Lauren Murray



TWITTER/@LAURENMURRAY99



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ALWAYS WHAT PETS NEED



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system and help maintain a shiny coat.

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'I'm sure work will kill me'

As he celebrates 35 years on screen, Eamonn Holmes fears that a mixture of early starts and Celtic genes could put him in an early grave

With demanding presenting jobs for ITV and Sky to juggle, Eamonn Holmes is beginning to have serious concerns about his work-life balance.

Working 20-hour days on a regular basis is far from advisable for anyone, least of all when you're only allowing yourself four hours of sleep per night.

'Every year I get a check-up and the doctor says I'm OK, but I think sleep deprivation is a very bad thing. I'm good at it but I'm sure it will kill me at some point,' says Eamonn, 55.

And while most people would be desperate for their beds after working such gruelling hours, Eamonn admits he often struggles to switch off. 'I'm up at 4am and I do my job, then fit in lots of other things – sometimes I'm not home until 9pm. I get to the end of the day and think "Oh, I've got to watch *House of Cards* or *Big Brother*," and suddenly it's 11pm. Then I'm up again at 3am and so one

DEDICATED



Eamonn and his wife, Ruth Langford, have been presenting daytime TV for years

day goes into the next.'

Sadly, Eamonn's dad, carpet fitter Leonard, passed away at an early age, forcing him to think about the potential effects his Irish genetics could have on his health. 'My dad died at 60,



Despite working so much, Eamonn struggles to switch off at night

so that doesn't give me much time – I'd better get on

with it! I know I want to be buried with him in Belfast, but if his grave is full with my brothers, then I want to be buried near my mum.'

Eamonn has always been honest about his health fears and is awaiting surgery on

his hips, which cause him constant pain. 'I need to have two hip replacements, but I'll keep going until they fall off and then I'll get them done,' he jokes.

But it's not all doom and gloom – Eamonn attributes his can-do attitude to his childhood hobby of running.

'I used to be a middle-distance runner at school and beyond, and it was brilliant,' he says. 'It stood by me for the rest of my life and made me strong. When I felt sick, I could hear my PE teacher in my ear, saying "All the way, Holmes, all the way," and now if I'm tired, I just remember that.'

It's not just your PE teacher cheering you on, Eamonn. We can't imagine daytime TV without you, so swap the late nights for a mug of Horlicks, please!

LIFE IN THE FAST LANE



He worries that his genetics and lifestyle might affect his health

TWITTER.COM/@EAMONNHOLMES

WORDS: HARRIET NOTTON PICTURES: REX FEATURES, SPLASH, TWITTER

THE SHOW MUST GO ON...

There are two guys – Tommy and Jamie – who make sure the show runs smoothly every week. They're the main prop guys and they've been on the show for as long as I can remember. The public don't get to see them, but without them the show just wouldn't run as smoothly as it does.

Strictly a winning formula!

There are always weeks when the worst dancer is saved – Jeremy Vine and Carol Kirkwood are two examples. But that's fine in my book, because *Strictly* is not just about the dancing. It's about falling in love with the celebs – and I love Jeremy. I loved Ainsley Harriott, too. I don't think it's wrong to vote for the

person who puts a smile on your face. We should realise that *Strictly* is entertainment, not just a dance competition, and the Jeremys of this world are brilliant entertainment and fun to watch. The public know much better than the judges which contestants they like seeing.



Aljaž Skorjanec defended partner Helen, too

DIVA HELEN

I read a story in a magazine last week that said *Call The Midwife* star Helen George is one of the least popular celebs behind the scenes. Where has this come from? I can honestly tell you from speaking to Ola, it's simply just not true. She's a lovely girl – and certainly no diva.



Strictly Laid Bare

James Jordan's views are *Strictly* his own...



CHILDREN IN NEED

The Beeb's annual fundraising event takes places on Friday (7:30pm, BBC One), and four *Strictly* pros will take to the floor with the cast of *Call The Midwife*.



PICTURES: BBC/RAY BURMISTON/MATT BURLEM, BBC/GUY LEVY, JAMES RUDLAND



Feeling *Downton* in the mouth?

As the hit costume drama ends, a study reveals that it's perfectly natural to grieve for your favourite TV shows

For millions of telly fans, the residents of *Downton Abbey* – from the upper-crust Crawleys to the downstairs crew of Carson, Mrs Hughes and co – have become part of the family.

For five years, they've been a vital ingredient of our Sunday nights; as comforting as cheese on toast. But now that the final episode of the phenomenally successful TV series has been aired, the nation has been plunged into mourning.

Sound dramatic? Not according to a study by Freesat, which found that many viewers compared watching the final credits roll on their favourite show to experiencing heartbreak.

The survey found that 15 per cent of respondents said the end of a beloved series felt like breaking up with a partner, with more than 56 per cent going as far as describing a feeling of 'intense sorrow'.

Downton Abbey has become a smash hit around the world, with more than

120 million viewers gripped by the dramas surrounding the Earl of Grantham and his three daughters.

Michelle Dockery, as Lady Mary, kept us guessing with her will-they-won't-they romance with Matthew Crawley, played by Dan Stevens, which ended in his untimely death in a car crash just after the birth of their baby son George.

Then, of course, there was the forbidden love between Lady Sybil (Jessica Brown Findlay) and chauffeur Tom Branson – which again ended horribly, with her death in childbirth.

In between, there have been the fabulous costumes, the amazing location and the acerbic put-downs from the Dowager Duchess, delivered impeccably by the timeless Dame Maggie Smith.

But if you're feeling downcast at the prospect of no more *Downton*, there's not too long to wait till the Christmas special, which Jim Carter (Mr Carson) has promised will be 'heart-rending'.

In the meantime, there's always the box set...

'The end of a beloved show is like a heartbreak'

ALSO GONE... BUT NOT FORGOTTEN



Friends

The lives and love of six young New Yorkers making their way in the world kept millions gripped between 1994 and 2004, making stars of its cast – including Jennifer Aniston.

24

Kiefer Sutherland as counter-terrorism agent Jack Bauer fought crime in breathlessly exciting hour-long episodes for 13 explosive years.



Only Fools and Horses

Lovable chancers Del Boy and Rodney Trotter (David Jason and Nicholas Lyndhurst), made this Peckham-set sitcom part of the national fabric.

Brookside

The Liverpool soap made household names of Sue Johnston and Ricky Tomlinson, and won over millions with its gritty realism, but was axed in 2003 after 21 years.



Dallas

The Ewings were true Eighties icons, and this much-loved show had an estimated 83 million viewers worldwide tuning in to find out who shot JR.



Grace and her family now love Christmas

AMAZING GRACE

My special Christmas blessing

Samantha McConnell, 43, longed for a child. But as a single woman with her biological clock ticking, she decided to take matters into her own hands

The winter months are depressing for everyone, but for me they were always particularly grim, full of darkness and death.

I lost my mum, Patricia, in November 2000 from a perforated stomach ulcer, my dad died in October 2004 from liver failure, and my only sister, Michelle, committed suicide in December 2006. It meant that although I had loving aunts, uncles and grandparents – all my immediate family were gone.

But now the festive period is full of light and life. I know there will be laughter and joy when my giggly toddler,

Grace, celebrates her third birthday this December – and then more fun at Christmas. Four years ago, things were so different. At 38 and single, I'd wondered if I'd ever have a family of my own.

I had always wanted to be a mum, but it just didn't work out for me – I guess it's the old story of not meeting the right man at the right time. But one day it really hit me. I was thinking about going into teaching, so I was doing work experience at a school when I suddenly realised that I didn't want to teach other people's children – I wanted to teach my own.

I knew the chances of meeting someone who wanted kids straight away were slim.

If I wanted to be a mum, I would have to go it alone, so one evening I typed 'sperm donors' into Google.

I came across the European Sperm Bank (ESB) in Denmark and one of the profiles caught my eye. It belonged to Lance, a 35-year-old Danish man who was 6ft

7in, had brown hair, blue eyes and fair, freckly skin like me. He also had a degree in music and was studying to be a doctor.

He sounded perfect.

So, in May 2010, after a consultation at a fertility clinic in Nottingham, I purchased four vials of donor sperm and embarked on a

journey of scans, blood tests and injections – as part of the intrauterine insemination (IUI) procedure.

I ate healthily, reduced my caffeine intake, stopped drinking and took my dogs on long walks. But, my first attempt was unsuccessful.

I felt despondent, but I didn't want to give up. My second attempt couldn't go ahead because the drugs I had injected overstimulated my ovaries, making me ill.

In November 2011, I tried once more. Yet again it was unsuccessful. Then, a month later, I was dealt even more bad news. My grandad, John, 90, had passed away.

That Christmas marked another bleak one for the family and I went to Belfast to spend it with my

grandmother Dorothea.

In the New Year, I returned home and began another round of IVF, praying I'd have more luck.

I tried acupuncture, I injected myself with hormones three times a day and then went to hospital to have any potential eggs removed.

They successfully retrieved seven and fertilised the best two with the donor sperm before implanting them inside me. Then, all I could do was wait.

Two weeks later, with my 40th birthday around the corner, I took a test and waited nervously.

'Thank you, thank you, thank you!' I cried, as I watched it turn positive.

My dreams of being a mother were finally coming true.

When I heard the little heartbeat at the six-week scan, I was overwhelmed.

For the first 18 weeks I was as sick as a dog, only able to keep down porridge and bananas.

After that, I became super organised, preparing everything I could for my baby's arrival.

But my joy was tainted when Gran was diagnosed

'To be a mum, I would have to go it alone'

WORDS: JULIA SHIRE PICTURES: PAGEONEPHOTOGRAPHY.CO.UK



Samantha, pictured in black, with her grandparents (left), sister and parents Patricia and Ronald



Auntie Glynis,
Samantha,
Grace and
uncle John



Little Grace
when she
was three
months old

with leukaemia. Her health was deteriorating quickly and, in September 2012, when I was six months pregnant, she died.

I was devastated and moved in with my aunt, Glynis, and uncle John,

in Belfast, who helped support me in the lead up to the birth.

On 12 December 2012, with my aunt at my side, I gave birth to Grace. She was 5lb 13oz and I felt a huge rush of love as I held her in my arms.

'Hello, little one,' I said, welling up as I looked at her beautiful little face.

After years of misery, it was the best Christmas ever. I dressed Grace in a red velvet dress and we shared cuddles around the Christmas tree.

It was simply magical.

Now, Grace is nearly three and a real character – lively, cheeky and so inquisitive. I can't wait for December – our tradition is to put the tree up just after her birthday.

Even though I decided to experience parenthood alone, I have never felt lonely. Losing people leaves you with sadness, of course, but I only ever wanted Grace for positive reasons. And while I still hope to meet the right man one day, until then, I will thrive on my own.

When Grace is older and asks me who her father is, I will be honest and tell her about the donor. When she's 18, she can contact him, if she wants to.

In the future, I'm planning on using my frozen embryos to try to give Grace a brother or sister.

But in the meantime, I will be looking forward to a happy Christmas for our little family – she has brought me so much joy.

THIS WEEK... FACING FERTILITY

TALKING POINT

WOMEN

We thrashed out this subject on *Loose Women* last week

'SORRY, GIRLS... YOU CAN'T HAVE IT ALL'

Ruth: That's what the retiring headmistress of a girls' school told her pupils. Women have a 'biological calendar', she says, and they need to decide between a career and motherhood. It seems a very old-fashioned and unpopular view in this enlightened age, but I think Vivienne Durham has a point.

Women have the eggs, and they don't stay fresh for ever – FACT. As a woman ages, her fertility declines – FACT.

Information is power, and young girls must be told about the reality if they're going to make informed choices.

A top NHS fertility expert is demanding that girls are taught at school about the dangers of delaying motherhood. Professor Geeta Nargund, a consultant gynaecologist, says that, all too often, she sees the utter disappointment on the faces of women who are told they've left it too late to conceive.

Boys should be taught about fertility at school, too – after all, it takes two to make a baby.

Young women now have a world of opportunities, and they can definitely combine a career with motherhood, but I think most working mothers would say it's not easy.

Just as important as telling girls they can 'have it all' is to tell them that they don't have to. Staying at home to look after children is as valid as working.

PICTURES: ALAMY, GETTY, REX (POSED BY MODELS)
PHOTOGRAPHY NICKY JOHNSTON



It's dog eat dog on the high street!

SHOPPING SHAKE-UP

Ruth: As we hit the shops in the run-up to Christmas, dawdlers are becoming so unpopular that some high streets are considering fast lanes on the pavement so people can avoid them. The idea is already being tried out in Liverpool, so that those of us in a hurry and who know what we want can avoid people who window-shop, walk along aimlessly and stop every two seconds to read their texts or answer their phones.

In short, people like Eamonn!



News, views and a fresh take with **Eamonn & Ruth**



These days I'm not taking any chances

DIET CON

Ruth: Many of us don't see diet drinks as unhealthy, and believe they will help us keep the weight off, but researchers from Sweden's Karolinska Institute have concluded that a couple of glasses per day could raise the risk of heart failure by almost a quarter.

Eamonn: It's the scariest thing I've read in ages. I've always been quite smug about barely drinking alcohol, thinking that diet drinks were doing me good. After all, that's the way they're advertised. As usual, it seems that, if it sounds too good to be true, it probably is. 'Half the calories' is starting to look like 'half the truth'. It's water for me from hereon in.



BEEP SHOW

Eamonn: I've recently realised that the sound I love most in the world is... the sound of silence. The trouble is, getting to hear it is nearly impossible.

There was I settling down with the papers and a cup of tea last Sunday when I heard a dull beep. But from where? The washing machine? Nope. The microwave? No luck. So I prowled around the hands-free phone, the clock, the fridge. It was driving me insane.

On and on it went. I felt my anxiety levels rising, and finally gave up on the papers. Why, I asked, do I need my dishwasher to tell me its cycle has ended anyway? It's not as if I sit there pondering if the frying pan is once again ready for use; I just assume that, an hour after I've put it in dirty, it'll emerge spotless. It's not a pivotal moment in my life that I need announced with a beep.

Ruth: But the most annoying thing of all for Eamonn was not that it was the hob all along, but that, when I turned up, I was the one who sussed it out!

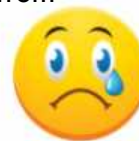


There's a din in the kitchen... but who knows what it is?

TEXT ERROR

Eamonn:

When is a smiley face not a smiley face? When it's an emoji! I was away for a couple of days recently and returned to a very *non-smiley* Ruth, who was not pleased at the response I had sent to a rather pleasant text from her. 'What sort of answer was that?' she snapped. I assured her that she was mistaken but, when she thrust her phone in my face, there they were: two question marks in response to the proposal she had made – talk about an own goal! Bemused, I called up our texts on my phone and, lo and behold, there was the message as I'd intended it. However, be warned: on some non-compatible phones, emojis can come out like this: ?? Well, either that or someone is trying to ruin my love life!





Gary's tips
will have you
turning heads
for all the
right reasons

Applying false eyelashes

To up the glamour, get to grips with faking it!

GARY COCKERILL had an unusual start to his working life – he was a coal miner!

Now one of the UK's best-known make-up artists, his talent for making up faces is entirely self-taught. Practising on his sister, mum and cousins led to a glittering career working with stars including Rachel Hunter and Kelly Brook. He's poured his know-how into a new book, *Simply Glamorous* (£25, Jacqui Small), and is the perfect person to advise us on a notoriously tricky subject – false lashes.



Gary's guide to dramatic lashes

- **Do your make-up as normal, including shadow, liner and mascara.** The falsies are the last stage, otherwise they're likely to drop or move. If you're prone to oily lids, a primer will help hold in place everything else applied on top.
- **Most lashes on the market fan out at the end for a natural 'cat's eye' look.** However, if you want to make yours look bigger, choose ones that are longer in the middle for an open-eyed effect.
- **Use an eyelash curler.** This will help create a natural curve for the false lash to adhere to so they don't look too fake.
- **Place the falsies over your lash line to see how they fit.** If they're too long, they can create an unflattering shadow on the eye. Usually they're short on the inside eye and longer towards the end, so cut from the outside in.
- **Apply the glue straight onto the strip, paying attention to the edges, because this is where they start to loosen first.** Wait for 8-10 seconds so the glue becomes tacky; if it's wet, it's more likely to slip and slide. If you're going out, keep the glue in your bag for any emergency touch-ups.
- **Using tweezers, place them as close to the root as possible.** Don't use a cotton bud because the fibres can shed and become stuck in the glue.
- **Once dry, fill any gaps along the roots with eyeliner.** Choose a gel or kohl rather than anything waxy, as the lash is likely to slip against it. If you're wanting extra drama, finish with another layer of mascara.
- **An oil-based make-up remover will dissolve the glue, then you can peel them off from the outside in.**



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beautiful hair*



BLENDING FOR SMOOTH, SLEEK HAIR
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Floral

From popular rose to classic outdoorsy scents, we've picked our favourite modern florals.

Chloé Signature EDT, £42 (30ml)

boasts rose as its dominant note. You can always go stronger with their original EDP.

Jean Paul Gaultier
Classique Glam
Edition EDT, £73
(100ml) uses neroli
and ginger for a
fiery finish.

For a richer
scent? **My Burberry
EDP Festive Edition,
£65 (50ml)** is an
earthy mix of sweet
pea, bergamot
and patchouli.

**Marc Jacobs
Decadence EDP, £49
(30ml), The Perfume
Shop**, mixes iris
with plum for a
grown-up
appeal.

12

scents of Christmas

From floral to fruit, go bold
with your festive fragrance

Match your scent to the season

Now that winter is here, your favourite perfume might not feel in keeping with the season. If you've always been wedded to one bottle, it might be worth broadening your horizons to a 'seasonal signature' scent.

'I love the idea of a personal signature, but there has been a shift in our views and many now prefer to have a "wardrobe" of perfumes, depending on the weather,'

says Mark Cramers, CEO of The Library of Fragrance. You are probably drawn to the same 'families' of perfumes, be it a floral, fruit or oriental scent, but want to go for a richer version that is too cloying in summer.

'Instinctively we tend to favour heavier, more intense aromas in winter,' says Lorna McKay of The Perfume Society. Typically, these include vanilla, sandalwood and musks. We've taken the intimidation out of finding yours here, with our pick of the best.

Fruit

You'll get fresh undertones with a warm base – perfect for the colder weather.



DKNY Be Desired EDP, £37 (30ml) is crisp and refreshing, thanks to blackcurrant and grapefruit, but jasmine heats it up.



Diesel Loverdose Red Kiss EDP, £33 (30ml) remains sweet for hours, starting with apple and warming up with vanilla and cocoa.



I Am Juicy Couture EDP, £37 (30ml) is tropical thanks to raspberry and passion fruit, but uses amber for staying power.



Hugo Boss Nuit Pour Femme EDP, £50 (50ml) smells of peach but has musky undertones for a sophisticated finish.



Thierry Mugler Angel Passion Edition EDP, £65 (50ml) starts fresh with coconut and mandarin, but intensifies.

Oriental

These are perfect for those who find florals and fruits overly sweet and feminine.



Estée Lauder Modern Muse Le Rouge EDP, £45 (30ml) balances sweet and spicy with redcurrant, pink pepper and saffron.



Paco Rabanne Olympéa EDP, £40 (30ml) starts with ginger flower and salty vanilla, but develops with rich sandalwood.

Avon Attraction For Her EDP, £15 (50ml) is the most full bodied. With pink pepper and black orchard, it will linger for hours.

Choosing your signature perfume

Avoid the lure of big names and posh packaging. The smell is the lasting impression, not the bottle. 'Choosing a scent is a very personal experience' says aroma consultant Daniele Ryman. 'Go alone and don't be persuaded by a friend.'

Firstly, take swatches of several perfumes to help narrow down your choice to two, then try them on your skin. The oils in the epidermis can change how it smells on individuals, and our pheromones – the chemicals in our sweat – affect this, too. Wait 24 hours until you make your final decision and, if you still like the scent after this time, it's likely to be one for you.

Then consider the strength. Colognes are light and eau de parfum, or EDP, are heaviest. Perfume experts agree that strong formulas are more popular during winter because of their sheer staying power, while colognes can often seem too cool. Most brands offer both eau de toilette and eau de parfum so you can choose your favourite concentration. If you're very new to fragrance you might prefer starting light.

Struck by the lurgy? The consensus is to wait until you can taste your food and your nose doesn't feel blocked, because it affects your sense of smell. Try waiting for a month before making the investment.

Lastly, fragrance is very subjective so, while they scientifically smell the same, our personal memory bank of scents play a part. If that bestseller doesn't grab you, you don't have to buy it!

Wear what you love, regardless of the brand or what the bottle looks like.

How to wear them

'Layer the scent over a matching (or unscented) lotion to give it something to cling onto,' says The Perfume Society's Lorna. This is because dry skin, common in winter, doesn't absorb ingredients as easily. Your pulse points remain the best application areas, and Mark says this is because they're 'typically the warmest parts of our bodies, and can help the liquid evaporate from the skin and be more noticeable.'

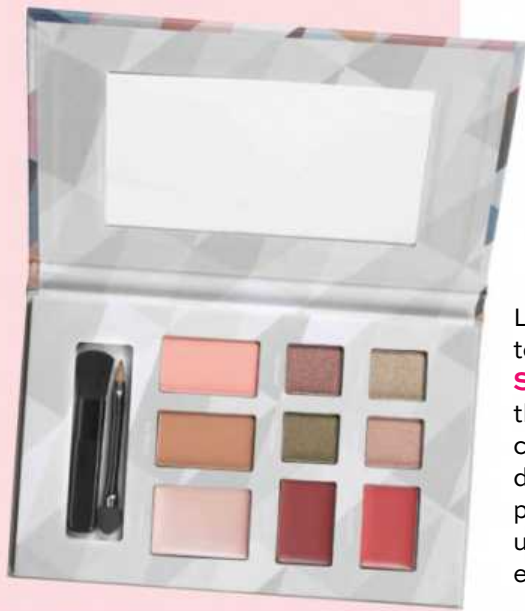
Go compact this

Finding the perfect beauty palette will see you through the festive season in style

It's around this time of year I am in beauty heaven. Why? All my favourite brands bring out wonderful kits that can transform your looks and could save you pennies. This year, the make-up kits have really caught my eye, and would make gorgeous gifts for a loved one or a pre-Christmas treat for yourself. Santa, take note!

STOCKING CHIC

Forget novelty gifts, stuff your favourite teen's stocking with something pretty, courtesy of B Creative. **The Limited Edition Colour Collection, £3.99**, contains subtle and wearable colours to create a nude make-up look. But what really gives this budget buy top marks are the small, but perfectly formed, brushes and generous mirror.



CAPSULE COLLECTION

Looking to cut down on cosmetic clutter or want to treat a make-up virgin? Try the **Pür Love Your Selfie Kit, £32**. All make-up bases are covered in this streamline selection, plus the wide shadow choice allows you to create a natural day or more dramatic smoky eye look, without adding any more products. The real added bonus has to be the useful step-by-step application guide, which is easy to follow and helps you create a flawless look.

Christmas

Beauty Blog



Look gorgeous
with **Patsy Kensit**

A CHEEKY SAVING!

Ace your base or consider contouring with **Benefit Real Cheeky Party Set, £29.50**. The selection of powder, highlighter and bronzer will help you achieve a sculpted, dewy look.



What I love most is the dinky mascara and liner from the cult They're Real range. If you've never tried it before, you must as it gives lashes va-va-voom. This kit is worth a whopping £110.23, so you are bagging a real bargain.



DESIGNER DELIGHT

At £59, the **YSL Kiss & Love Multi Usage Palette** isn't cheap, but with seven shadows, two lip choices and a wearable blush, there's a lot of designer bang for your buck.

LITTLE MARVEL

Bobbi Brown limited-edition Caviar Mini Lip & Eye Palette, £26.50, slips into the smallest party bag or evening purse for on-the-go touch-ups.



INNOVATION
THROUGH
THE AGES



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BUSY HANDS
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WITH OUR PICK OF
THE LATEST LOOKS
FROM YOUR
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STREET STORES

PARTYWEAR
SPECIAL



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DUNE



£65



£59



£79



£20

£85



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a statement
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Skirt, £165,
both at Coast
Shoes, stylist's own

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COAST

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£150



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SPECIAL

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*Opt for a wrap
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colour for classic
Christmas style!*

Dress
(necklace
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Shoes,
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£55

£22

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THE high street edit



£25



£14⁹⁹

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£3⁹⁹

£27⁹⁹



£10



£25

ACCESSORIZE



£15

£29



PRIMARK



£12



£17

£18



Scarf, £22,
Accessorize



Snood, £10,
JohnLewis



Hat, £17.50
Gloves, £15
Shirt, £35
Top, £19.95
All at White
Stuff



Hat, £10,
very.co.uk



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Perfect
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Mittens, £25,
becksondergaard.com

Scarf, £27.50,
White Stuff

Scarf, £9,
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100%
of the profits
of this hat go to
the Alder Hey
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campaign -
we've gone team
beanie!

get festive

#because
itschristmas



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'I've been given the gift of life'

Stacie Pridden, 24, from Swindon, was scared she wouldn't survive to see this Christmas. But, after a heart and lung transplant, she's looking to the future

Christmas is always a special time, and this year

it has an extra glow of magic for me. Because I was convinced I wouldn't live to see December 2015.

I was born with three holes in my heart and, although doctors operated to close them, I still had problems breathing. Then, when I was 11, I was diagnosed with pulmonary hypertension.

This is a rare blood vessel disorder of the lungs, which means that my heart is less efficient at pumping blood and oxygen around my body. I needed regular treatment

and operations to strengthen my blood vessels.

My non-identical twin sister, Megan, didn't share my health problems. In fact, we hardly shared anything. Megan's blonde, I'm brunette. She is 5ft 3in, I'm three inches taller. But nothing ever diminished our sisterly bond.

My condition led to me fainting regularly at school, so Megan would always look out for me. She'd take over my conversations, to let me get my breath back, or make me sit down when my lips were turning blue.

And because I was never allowed abroad, due to the treatment I needed, Megan would fill me in on the school trips she went on.

At home, we'd curl up on the sofa with huge bars of chocolate and watch our favourite Harry

Potter films or, when I was well enough, we'd go away for the weekend to *The Vampire Diaries*' UK

conventions. Those were our favourite times – just the two of us, laughing at how geeky we were.

But weekends away got less and less frequent as my health deteriorated. While Megan got a job in a hospital, I had to give up my part-time job as a sales assistant, as I couldn't be on my feet all day. Aged 21, I was put on the list for a heart and lung transplant because my lung function had decreased so severely. I could barely walk 20 metres without collapsing, breathless.

I tried to be positive but, deep down, I knew how rare it was to receive the organs my body desperately needed. So, as a way of coming to terms with my situation, I started to joke about it.

I gave my family strict instructions that everyone was to wear black to my funeral, but that they had to pick the songs, as I couldn't decide. And when Megan, a nurse, had to work over Christmas, I told her to tell her boss it might be my last one, so she could get out of it.

Megan would get angry at my dark humour. She told me I had to believe I was going to get well. She didn't see that this was my way of coping.

Between May 2013 and October 2014, I got three calls from the hospital to tell me they had donor organs,

but none of them were viable. I was devastated.

Many people passed away while on the transplant list, and it seemed likely that I was going to be one of them.

As I entered 2015, I could feel myself grow weaker. My older sister, Candice, had a little girl in March. I knew I had to make the most of every minute – the way I was feeling then, I couldn't imagine making it to my 25th birthday in December.

Then, at the end of May, I got a call from the hospital. This time, it seemed different. I was asked to go within a few hours, and soon found myself in surgery.

As the anaesthetist prepared me for the operation, I wept. This was the procedure I'd been so desperate for, but it was also extremely dangerous. Although it could save my life, it could also kill me.

Luckily, six-and-a-half hours later, I woke up, bleary-eyed, in intensive care. I was sore, but in no more pain than usual. Within 12 hours, I was off morphine and able to sit in a chair.

The surgeon said my lungs had been in a much worse state than they'd expected – so it was probably no surprise that I could feel

The twins with older sister Candice

Stacie and Megan share a close bond

SISTER ACT

Double joy: Stacie and her twin Megan can look to the future

the difference almost immediately. I could walk further and talk for longer.

I was in hospital for 20 days, to ensure my body had accepted the new organs. Since then, my whole life has changed. I now walk 5-10 kilometres a day and cycle about 15-20k. Although I can't work or travel for a year, because my immune system is weak, I'm enjoying deciding on where to go first.

Recently, shopping with a friend, she kept asking me if I wanted to sit down and rest, the way I'd always needed to in the past. Neither of us could believe that I spent a whole day on my feet.

My consultant told me my new organs should last me for at least five years, but I know people who had their transplant 10 or 15 years ago and are still fine. I'm praying I'll be like them.

My reasons for living keep on growing. Megan is pregnant, and knowing I'll be there to see her baby be born and grow up is an indescribable feeling.

So, this Christmas, I won't be making a list for Santa - because all my wishes have already come true.'

● To find out more about becoming a donor, visit organdonation.nhs.uk

A beaming Stacie with her parents post-op

New heart, new lungs, new life!

2016, HERE I COME!

Christmas dinner is turkey with rice and peas!

EastEnders eye candy Richard Blackwood talks Christmas plans, his love of comedy and feeling at home in Albert Square...

At 43, Richard Blackwood says his partying days are over. The former stand-up comedian and stepbrother to Naomi Campbell has survived bankruptcy and a battle with depression over the past 12 years. But he tells *Best* the dark days are behind him now – off screen, at least...

Hi, Richard. How's it going filming Christmas over in Albert Square?

We're all working very hard and all the hours God sends. You have to be very strict about going out, but it's a lovely job and I'm grateful to be there.

Is it hard passing up a lot of Christmas party invites?

You know what, I don't drink or smoke,

I've never done drugs and, actually, I'm a very home-loving person. A lot of people look at me and think, 'he's a party animal', but I'm really not. I'm done with the partying – I'm 43.

What can you tell us about Christmas for you and Kim (Richard's on-screen wife, played by Tameka Empson)?

Well, we haven't put the Christmas decorations up yet, I'll leave that to her [laughs]. But you'll come to understand Vincent better. You'll see why he is the way he is – where the darkness comes from. I love playing him. He's *so* not me – I'm warm and friendly, not a violent guy at all. But I like the fact that he has no fear.

Tameka won funniest female at the Inside Soap awards for playing your wife, didn't she?

Look, Tameka's funny because I help her with her jokes [laughs]. Seriously, she's a nutcase. She's absolutely mad. I'm going grey working with her.

I'm so not Vincent – I'm warm and friendly

Looking sharp with mini-me son Keaun

Will there be any more bust-ups between you and Phil (Steve McFadden)?

What does my smile tell you? Vincent is good enough to take Phil on. He's strong enough. All I'm going to say is... he's equally yoked, as they say in the Bible. They're as tough as each other, so it should be interesting this Christmas.

You're a dad on set to baby Pearl. How many children do you have in real life?

I have an amazing son. He's 14, but 'Pearl' makes me feel it might be time for another!

Is that likely? Do you have a girlfriend? [Laughs] I never talk about my personal life. Just know I am very happy.

Where will you spend Christmas?

It'll be our whole family in London. We have a traditional Christmas dinner with a Jamaican twist – rice and peas. Plus rum punch and Guinness punch.

WORDS: SIOBHAN WYLES PICTURES: BBC, INSTAGRAM, REX

Richard says his on-screen family has made him feel broody



There's trouble between Vincent and Phil this Christmas



INSTAGRAM/@RICHARDBLACKWOOD



Back to his comedy roots as Donkey in *Shrek* with Dean Cain and Kimberley Walsh

Guinness punch?

Yes, the Irish and black have a similar history. We understand each other, don't we? [Laughs].

Do you have any other Christmas traditions?

Yes, I go to church – I'm Catholic. See what I mean about understanding the Irish?

Who would you say you get on with best on set, apart from Tameka?

Diane Parish and Matt Di Angelo are great. Matt's just very, very funny, I love him. Plus, we both play the trouble-makers. And, of course, he's a Taurus like me.

Are you into astrology then?

Yes. My mum's a Leo. One way or another, Leos keep you in line!

Do you ever miss playing the funny man? You were amazing as Donkey in *Shrek*...

Thank you very much. Comedy is in my heart. I did 22 years of stand up, but I'm a very loyal person. *EastEnders* gave me a job when I needed one and that turned my life around – if you've got my back, then I've got yours, so I'm here for as long as they want me to be.

Would you ever ask for a break to do something like *Strictly*?

If they asked me, I'm a very good dancer. You name it, I'll do it. I'm a serious dancer. I scare myself.

THIS WEEK...

Straight Talk...



With Loose Woman
Coleen Nolan

Avocado on toast? Even I could make that!

Nigella Lawson has come under fire for showing us how to make avocado on toast on her new Monday night BBC Two show *Simply Nigella*. I tend to agree. It was a bit bloody ridiculous, to be honest.

Whoever thought it'd be a good idea to put an avocado in a bowl, mash it and call it a midnight snack 'recipe'?

I can't cook to save my life, but even I could manage avocado on toast!

Twitter went into meltdown over 'Avocadogate', with lots of people arguing it was a waste of licence payers' money, and saying even a four-year-old could have put the idea together!

'Where's the bit where she gets up in the middle of the night and sticks her face in a trifle?' one amused fan tweeted about her munchies offering.

If the BBC is really going to start making cookery programmes for people with that level of culinary skill, I'd like to put in a request for my own, please: *How To Put The Kettle On and Make a Good Cuppa with Coleen Nolan*.

Plus *101 Ideas For Toast* eggs, beans, even avocado – it's all possible! I might even push my followers to try mash and fish fingers... I could flog my books and get rich, too!

I appreciate the domestic goddess plays on being sexy in the kitchen – all low-cut tops and slinky dresses – and avocados are a well-known

aphrodisiac, but, Nigella, this level of 'cookery' gets a thumbs down from me, I'm afraid.

My Ray loves cooking and he – and your viewers – want to be inspired. Ray's recipes may never turn out like the professionals', but he loves giving it a go.

So get back to what you do best, love. You're known for being a cook, so do us all a favour and inspire us!



RESCUING *the* BLAND



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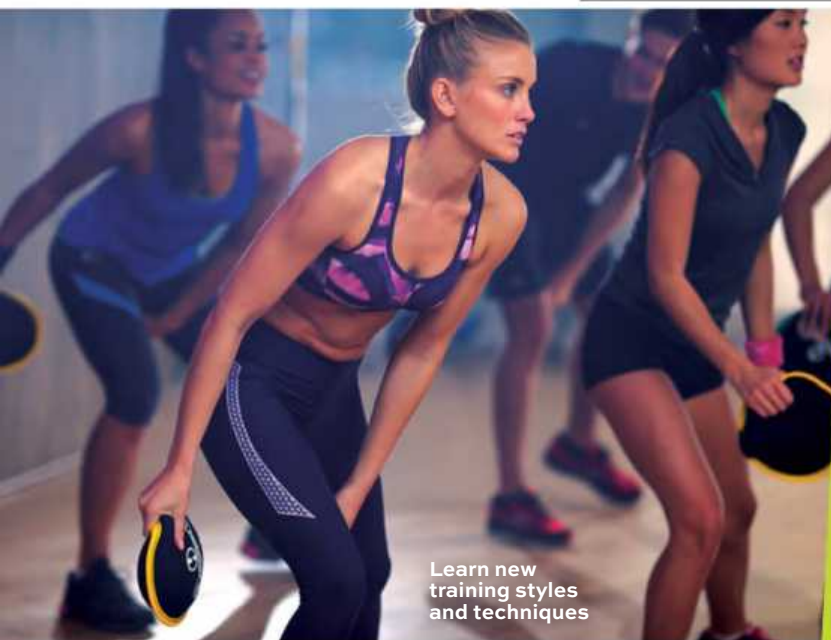


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Slippers, £39, Jigsaw



best READER OFFER



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for better
results

FREE 3-DAY CLASS PASS

*for every reader**

As Team GB's Official Fitness Partner, Fitness First has already begun the countdown to the Rio 2016 Olympic Games! They're giving you the chance to win a 12-month membership where you'll have the opportunity to train like an Olympian with exercise tips and techniques from Team GB and English Institute of Sport coaches. Fitness First members have access to a number of unique workshops taking place in clubs nationwide throughout the year, focusing on strength and conditioning, sports psychology and sports nutrition – so you can experience the same training methods used by Team GB hopefuls! Plus every entrant will receive a 3-day guest pass so you can try out the latest classes, training styles and techniques in one of over 70 UK clubs. With freestyle work-out areas, heart rate-monitored gym sessions and a whole range of classes, from yoga to Zumba, you're sure to find something to suit you.



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TERMS AND CONDITIONS Your pass is valid at all Fitness First clubs (excluding Tier 1) and must be used within 14 days of download. One voucher per person. This voucher has no cash value. You must be 18 or over.



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It's best to make the filling well in advance, to let the flavours develop. The pastry can be made up to four days ahead, or frozen for up to one month.

MERRY MINCE PIES

Nothing beats the smell of freshly baked mince pies. Our mince is adapted from a collation of family recipes and contains a mixture of fruit, apples and warming spices, all bound with a generous glug of brandy.

MAKES 24

PREPARATION TIME

Mince: If possible, make up to 2 months in advance.

Pastry: 50 minutes, plus 1 hour chilling time

COOKING TIME 25 minutes

MINCE

- 470g raisins
- 460g sultanas (golden raisins)
- 450g currants
- 2 apples, peeled, cored and grated
- 310g light brown sugar
- 150g butter, melted
- 1 tsp ground cinnamon

Home-baked treats add a personal touch to your festive table. For the best results, make these recipes now, to enjoy when the big day arrives!

Bake ahead for Christmas

- ½ tsp grated nutmeg
- ½ tsp ground cloves
- Finely grated zest and juice of 1 lemon
- Finely grated zest and juice of 1 orange
- 200ml brandy

PASTRY

- 350g plain (all-purpose) flour
- 110g self-raising flour
- 90g icing sugar
- 240g cold butter, diced
- 2 egg yolks, at room temperature
- 50ml iced water
- Caster sugar, to sprinkle

FOR THE MINCE

Mix together the raisins, sultanas and currants in a food processor. Pulse the dried fruit mix until coarsely chopped. Transfer into a large mixing bowl and add the rest of the ingredients. Mix with a wooden spoon. Put in a sealed container and store in the fridge till needed.

FOR THE PASTRY

Sift the flours and icing sugar into a bowl. Using an electric mixer, fitted with a paddle attachment, add the butter and mix until it resembles fine breadcrumbs. Combine the egg yolks and the iced water and pour into the flour and butter, then mix at low speed until just combined. Remove from the bowl, press into a disc and wrap in plastic wrap. Rest for at least 1 hour in the fridge before using. Preheat the oven to 180°C/350°F. Lightly grease two 12-hole 80ml (2½ fl oz/⅓ cup) muffin tins.

TO ASSEMBLE

On a lightly floured surface, roll out the pastry to 3mm (⅛ in) thickness. Using an 8cm (3¼ in) round pastry cutter, cut out 24 rounds and place in muffin tins. Spoon 2-3 tsp fruit mince into each. Re-knead the scraps and chill before rolling again. Roll and cut out lids to desired shapes (e.g. stars and rounds); sprinkle with caster sugar. Bake for 20-25 mins until golden. Leave to cool in the tins.



CHRISTMAS FRUIT CAKE

Fruit cake is a classic choice for Christmas. Though our recipe may look complicated, it is, actually, very easy if you prepare all the ingredients and line the tin before you start.

MAKES One 25cm cake
PREPARATION TIME
 30 minutes, plus overnight soaking time for fruit and 30 minutes for icing the cake
COOKING TIME
 1 hour 30 minutes

CAKE

- 215g sultanas (golden raisins)
- 195g currants
- 150g pitted prunes
- 110g mixed peel (mixed candied citrus peel), home-made or best quality store-bought
- 120g raisins
- 1 apple, peeled, cored and grated
- 4 tbsp marmalade
- 60ml brandy
- Finely grated zest

- and juice of 1 lemon
- Finely grated zest and juice of 1 orange
- 150g plain (all-purpose) flour
- 1 tsp ground cinnamon
- 1 tsp mixed spice
- ½ tsp salt
- 125g butter, softened
- 125g light brown sugar
- 90g golden syrup (light treacle)
- 3 eggs, at room temperature
- 100g ground almonds

ICING

- 500g ready-made marzipan
- 3 tbsp apricot jam, heated and sieved
- 500g ready-made fondant
- 1 egg white

- 1 In a large ceramic or glass bowl, combine the sultanas, currants, prunes, mixed peel, raisins, apple, marmalade, brandy, citrus zests and juices and soak overnight at room temperature.
- 2 Preheat the oven to 160°C/315°F. Lightly grease and line the base of a 25cm (10in) round cake tin with several layers of baking paper.
- 3 Sift the flour, cinnamon, mixed spice and salt together.
- 4 Using an electric mixer with a beater attachment,

**TURN OVER
FOR MORE...**



The cake can be made three to four months ahead and left un-iced. Once iced, store it in an airtight container for up to a month.

cream the butter and sugar until pale and creamy. Mix in the golden syrup, then add the eggs, one at a time, beating well after each addition. Gently fold in the sifted ingredients and ground almonds. Finally, fold in the fruit mixture.

5 Spoon the mixture into the lined tin and smooth the surface with a flat knife. Bake for approximately 1½ hours, or until a skewer inserted into the middle of the cake comes out clean.

6 Cool completely in the tin. Remove the cake from the tin and wrap in baking paper and foil. Keep it in a cool, dark place until you are ready to eat it.

7 When the time comes to ice the cake, trim the

top to ensure it is flat, and patch any holes on the cake with marzipan until you

have a smooth surface. Roll out to a 6mm (¼in)

thickness, and cut out a 25cm (10in) circle. Brush the top of the cake with the warmed and sieved apricot jam. Place the marzipan on top of the cake, pressing it down until smooth.

8 Knead and roll out the fondant to the same thickness and cut out another 25cm (10in) circle. Carefully brush the marzipan with the lightly beaten egg white, and finish off with the fondant layer. Decorate as desired (see our starry suggestion above).



Panforte
can be made in
advance and kept at
room temperature in an
airtight container for up
to 20 months - but
we suspect yours will
be eaten long
before that!

PANFORTE

Bite into a slice of our panforte and you may be surprised at how chewy it is. Mixing the fruits, spices, nuts, cocoa powder and flour with a syrup made from sugar and honey gives the cake an almost candy-like texture. Panforte stores well, so you can hide it away and cut off small pieces any time of the year, for whenever you have a craving for a sweet treat!

MAKES

One 20x30cm cake

PREPARATION TIME

40 minutes

COOKING TIME

1 hour

- 3 rice paper sheets
 - 350g (12oz/2⅓ cups) plain (all-purpose) flour
 - 30g (1 oz/¼ cup) dark cocoa powder
 - 1½ tsp ground cinnamon
 - 1½ tsp freshly ground black pepper
 - 1 tsp ground ginger
 - ½ tsp ground cloves
 - ½ tsp freshly grated nutmeg
 - 375g blanched almonds, lightly toasted
 - 375g skinned hazelnuts, lightly toasted
 - 290g raisins
 - 185g whole dried figs, quartered
 - 180g currants
 - 200g dried apricots, diced
 - 205g prunes, pitted and halved
 - 125g mixed peel, finely diced
 - 370g caster sugar
 - 260g honey
- 1 Preheat the oven to 150°C/300°F. Lightly grease and line a 20x30cm (8x12in) slab tin with the rice paper sheets, trimming to fit.
 - 2 In a large bowl, sift together the flour, cocoa powder and spices. Add in all the nuts and dried fruit and mix well.
 - 3 In a heavy-based medium saucepan, combine the sugar and honey; bring slowly to the boil. Cook until the mixture reaches the 'soft ball' stage – 116°C/241°F, measured using a sugar thermometer – at about 15 minutes. Be very cautious as you pour the hot syrup into the fruit and nut mix. Quickly and carefully, stir with a wooden spoon until it's combined and the fruit and nuts are evenly coated – not an easy job!
 - 4 Press evenly into the prepared tin. Bake the mixture for approximately 45 minutes, or until the top of the panforte is matt in appearance. Remove from the oven and let it cool in the tin.
 - 5 Turn out on to a chopping board and carefully cut the panforte into pieces with a serrated knife, using a sawing motion.

EXTRACTED FROM



The Cook and Baker
by Cherie Bevan
and Tass Tauroa, by
Murdoch
Books, £20.
Photography
by Chris Chen



We take the hassle out of the supermarket shop so you can enjoy a fantastic feast

STRESS-FREE **STARTERS**

Requiring minimal preparation, kick-start your Christmas dinner with one of these tasty titbits

Best buy



Morrisons M Signature Holly Terrines, £6 for 275g This is certainly one way to dress up fish! These terrines keep their shape beyond the fridge, and while we were sceptical about the horseradish mousse, it's delicate enough to add a gentle spicy balance to the creamy spinach and cooling salmon. An impressive-yet-effortless option.

Aldi Specially Selected Large Salmon & Dill Tart, £5.99

Cook from frozen for 20 mins and you've a pretty impressive starter. The pastry puffs up and the top turns out golden – if we hadn't put it into the oven ourselves, we'd have thought it was fresh. Perfectly seasoned, too.

Value choice



Go luxe



M&S Salmon Pearls, Smoked Salmon & Lemon Mousse, £6 for two This stands out from the crowd for presentation alone. The lemon lifted the salmon flavour and the texture is light and creamy. It's rich enough for one pearl to be plenty.

The Co-op Prawn Cocktail Prosecco Verrines, £4.99

Anything booze-infused gets our vote. A modern take on a popular classic, if we're being honest the fizz flavour is minimal but does add a nice punch to the creamy pot. They don't scrimp on prawns, either.

New twist



The best Christmas food

PUT TO THE TEST!

SEAFOOD **PLATTERS**

Feeling stuffed? Pick and make an impress



Best buy

Tesco Finest Christmas Platter, £10 A plentiful selection of fresh prawns. The accompanying creamy cocktail dip has a pleasing tang and doesn't run out before the prawns...



Go luxe

Sainsbury's Taste The Difference Fish Platter, £14, online only at [sainsburys.co.uk](https://www.sainsburys.co.uk) Ready-prepared salmon, crab and prawns, we like the refreshing lemon-zinged crab.



a lighter option for Boxing Day
ion with a stand-out fish dish



**New
twist**

Asda Extra Special Sushi Platter, £12

Easy to pick at, this fresh platter is deceptively filling. There are salmon options for discerning taste buds, and veggie options if raw fish isn't your thing.

VERY GOOD **VEGGIES**

These are perfect, flavoursome accompaniments to your roast



**Best
buy**

**Morrisons
Salted Caramel
Parsnips, £2**
These really work, adding a sweet tang to a salty dish.



**Value
choice**

**The Co-op Loved
By Us Winter
Roasting Veg,
£1.50** A brilliant way to cut out the hassle without breaking the bank.



**Go
luxe**

**Sainsbury's Taste
The Difference
Rainbow Carrots,
£3.50** Christmas is brighter with this addition to the table.



**New
twist**

**Iceland Luxury
Sprout Mix with
Stilton, Gorgonzola,
Chestnut & Bacon,
£1.99** A cheesy and decadent sprout offering.



NEW SWEET TREATS

Finish the day with a delicious dessert

CHRISTMAS CAKES

Aldi Specially Selected Centre Piece Cake, £9.99

In the presentation stakes, this definitely has the 'wow' factor. It's almost too pretty to cut into! The inside isn't a let-down either, with even-sized chunks of fruit and nut.

Best buy



The best Christmas food

PUT TO THE TEST!



Value choice

Iceland Luxury Christmas Cake, £6.49 Simple in design, if you're looking for a classic without bells and whistles, this does the job perfectly. The icing is the right side of sweet and the fruit mix delicate but filling.



New twist

M&S Hand Decorated Falling Star Cake, £20

Forget your traditional snowman figurine, we love the modern, delicate decorations that adorn the top of this cake. The fruity filling has a boozy tang so you may only want a little slice to satisfy your sweet tooth!



Go luxe

Tesco Finest Two-Tier Winter Enchantment Cake, £20

Beautifully presented, in a similar fashion to a wedding centrepiece, we love the woodland-inspired decorations topping this fruit cake. A generous layer of marzipan and thick icing holds the flavour nicely. An impressive centrepiece.

CHOCOLATE TR



Go luxe

M&S Collection Tree Stump Yule Log, £20

If you're looking for the crème de la crème of Yule logs, look no further. Like a show-stopper in the *Bake Off* final, this one, which is basically more of a tree thanks to its 3D-style effect, definitely looks the part! Well worth the splurge.

Go
luxe

M&S Collection Marc De Champagne Christmas Pudding, £14 One of the more attractive-looking desserts thanks to its appealing gold-flecked shell, besides heating up, the only job required is to pour the rich, mulled wine sauce on top that keeps the whole dessert moist. No chance of a dried-out pud here!

New
twistBest
buyValue
choice

PERFECT PUDDINGS

From hidden centres to gorgeous glazes, it's hard not to be tempted by these offerings

Waitrose Christmas Signature Spice Fruit Sponge Pudding, £10 Lighter than the traditional fruity pudding thanks to the aforementioned sponge quota, this has a zesty flavour and looks pretty luxe to boot. Great if you fancy a sweet treat without the excessively rich aftertaste.

Asda Extra Special Melt In The Middle Fig & Brandy Pudding, £7 True to the Christmas carol, fig reigns supreme in this dessert, and the moist middle means there's no chance of the fruit mix drying out. We love the glazed orange slices coating the outside, too.

Aldi Specially Selected Champagne Christmas Pudding, £3.99 Rich in flavour with a highly alcoholic taste, and tightly packed full of fruit and nuts. A little certainly goes a long way, so go easy on the portions. A fancy festive treat at an amazingly low price.

EATS Who can resist the lure of these chocolate desserts?

Go
luxe

Iceland Luxury Chocolate Buche, £5.99

This is quite small but the flavour is certainly packed in. Smooth and rich, this is melt-in-the-mouth delicious, and the shine on top makes it look very expensive.

The Co-op Loved By Us Chocolate & Amaretto Yule Log, £4 This light and fluffy cake is the perfect chocolate dessert without being too sickly. One for the grown-ups as the amaretto leaves a strong kick!

Value
choiceNew
twist

Asda Extra Special Red Velvet Yule Log, £8 Luxurious and eye-

catching, this yule log is full of rich, creamy flavour. Set off with a red sparkle, it couldn't be more perfect for the season.

TEA TIME MINCE PIES

Small but mighty, indulge in these classic festive treats

Value
choice

Lidl Favorina Mince Pies, £1.49 for 12 The perfect, crumble-free pastry on these pies is a winner. Sweet and fruity and not too rich, they're a firm family favourite.

Go
luxe

Tesco Finest Deep-filled Mince Pies, £2 for six Delicious with a hearty taste thanks to their glacé cherries and almonds. The subtle snowflake decoration adds a quality touch, too.

New
twist

Aldi Specially Selected All Butter Almond Mince Pies, £1.99 for six These have a delicious crunchy biscuit base rather than pastry. The mincemeat has a brandy kick and the almond topping keeps the classic taste intact.

Best
buy

Iceland Luxury Mince Pies, £1.49 for six Rich, succulent mincemeat packed into a buttery pastry, these prove you don't have to splash the cash for a great-tasting pie. A real bargain.



THE MAIN EVENT **NEW ROASTS**

Set the standard for the biggest meal of the year with an impressive meat option

Aldi Specially Selected British Salted Caramel & Bourbon Ham Joint, £12.99 Jumping on the sweet and salty trend, this gorgeous pick from Aldi cooks easily in a bag, keeping the entire flavour and taking the fuss out of cooking. If you're keen for a different option to traditional turkey, this is a guaranteed alternative hit with your festive guests.



**Best
buy**

**Value
choice**

**The
best
Christmas
food**

PUT TO THE TEST!



Aldi Specially Selected Five Bird Roast, £9.99 A tightly packed crown that feeds a crowd for under a tenner. Comprising of turkey, duck, goose, pheasant, chicken with a pork, clementine and cranberry stuffing, this is a meat lover's dream (it's even topped with bacon!). The flavours work well together and it's finished off nicely with a port and cranberry glaze.

ORDER FROM THE **BUTCHER'S COUNTER**

Morrisons M Signature British Stuffed Lamb Guard Of Honour With Festive Stuffing, from £18 (price dependent on size) Prepared at the butcher's counter so it's oven ready, the lamb's wonderfully tender and the pork, cranberry and apple stuffing complements it perfectly. There's hardly any shrinkage so you won't be left hungry. Available from 10 December.

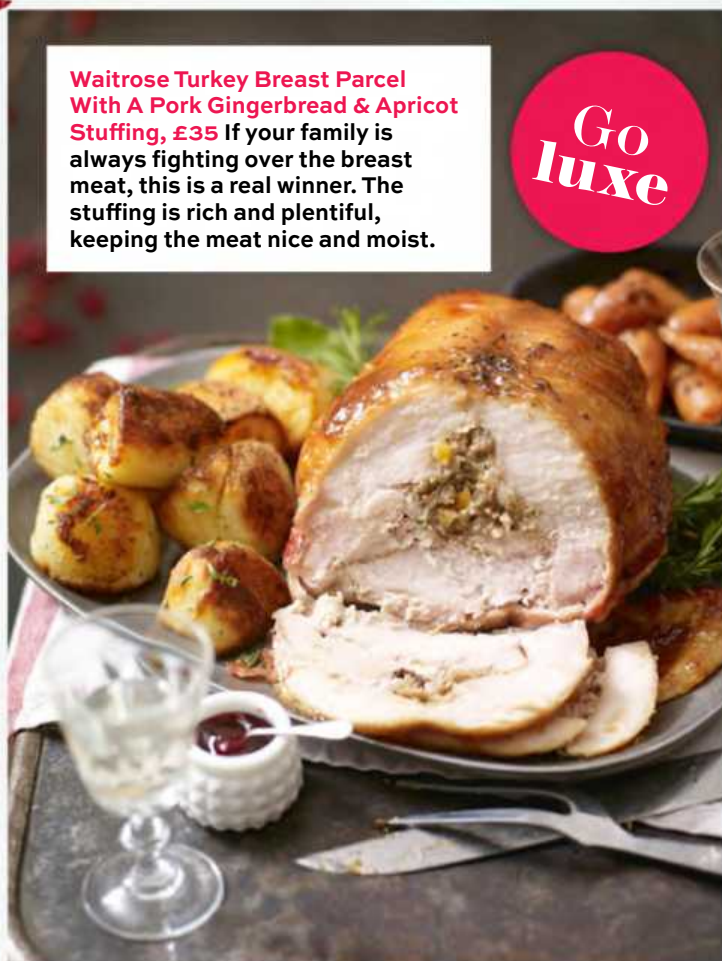


Sainsbury's Taste The Difference Pork Loin With Cranberry & Caramelised Orange Stuffing, from £14 (available to order at [sainsburys.co.uk](https://www.sainsburys.co.uk)) Who needs apple when you have a cranberry and caramelized orange stuffing? It adds an extra plump and tasty texture to the pork, and helps to keep the joint moist. The easy-to-follow instructions keeps the stress to a minimum with just two hours' cooking time required.



Waitrose Turkey Breast Parcel With A Pork Gingerbread & Apricot Stuffing, £35 If your family is always fighting over the breast meat, this is a real winner. The stuffing is rich and plentiful, keeping the meat nice and moist.

**Go
luxe**



Asda Extra Special Chorizo Topped Aberdeen Angus Rump Beef Joint, £15 Forget bacon, the fat from the chorizo infused the beef so no extra oil is needed. The beef is tender and the chorizo crispy, and each element manages to have its own flavour without being overpowering. We might put chorizo on everything...

**New
twist**



**Blow
the
budget**

Sainsbury's Taste The Difference Easy Carve British Duck, Turkey & Guinea Fowl With A British Pork, Blackberry & Cranberry Stuffing, £60 Easy to cook and well presented with layers of bacon on top, guinea fowl makes a great alternative to turkey. The stuffing had a fantastically unique sweet and tart taste, too.



Iceland Luxury Wild Boar Cracker With A Red Wine Sauce, £11.99 One of the more unusual offerings, the cracker-style presentation, in the form of the decorative pastry, made for a nice festive touch. The meat is tender, and because it's already dressed up it's easy to carve. The rich flavour means a little goes a long way.

**Frozen
fave**





Champagne on test

Which bottle has the FIZZ FACTOR?

Splashing out on bubbles this Christmas?
Here are our recommendations...

Now, we don't call ourselves experts, but when it comes to booze, like you, we simply want to know what's worth our dosh. With all the big name supermarkets selling bottles of plonk

at low prices, can they compete with the famous names?

We blind test leading supermarket fizz with prestige brand Bollinger to find out. It's a tough job, but we selflessly put ourselves up for it...



3/5

Bollinger Special Cuvee Champagne, £40

When it comes to the pricey stuff, our testers were split. Some declared it synthetic in flavour, with a strong, overpowering smell, but the rest were won over by the bold, fruity taste. If you like your champers strong, splash out!



4/5

Marks & Spencer Oudinet Champagne, £25

At the higher end of the supermarket price bracket, this bubbly was rated highly for its dry, crisp and fruity finish, with the overall consensus being that it tasted expensive. Not short of bubbles, this went down very nicely.



5/5

Asda Extra Special Louis Bernard Premier Cru Champagne, £19.75

A delicate, fruity taste (some of our testers could detect pear when quaffing this), this fizzy had a pleasant, dry-yet-tangy aftertaste that left us wanting more.



4/5

Aldi Monsigny Veuve Champagne, £12.99

A heady mix of fizz with a super sharp kick, this Aldi champers had a distinctive fruity flavour that left behind a lovely moreish aftertaste.



The
£10
bottle of
bubbles



3/5

**Sainsbury's
Blanc de Noirs
Champagne,
£20**

Opinion was divided on this bottle of bubbly, with half of the testers wowed by the rich quality and the other half merely likening it to an average sparkling white wine. The jury is well and truly out on this one!



5/5

**Tesco Finest
Premier Cru
Champagne,
£18**

If you prefer your plonk on the sweet side, this is the one to go for when you're entertaining this season, with its peach and vanilla flavours dominating. A fab lighter option.



3/5

**Netto
E. Michel
Champagne,
£18.99**

Subtle in bubbles and flavour, the only setback with this champagne from Netto was its slightly bitter aftertaste. A satisfactory rather than stunning bottle.



3/5

**Lidl Bissinger
& Co
Premier Cru
Champagne,
£15.99**

More sharp than sweet, these bubbles linger and the overall opinion of our tippie testers was that this bargain option from Lidl had an expensive taste. Not bad!



4/5

**Iceland Charles
Montaine, £10**

Can a bottle of champers really taste good at just £10 a bottle? Apparently so. One of our testers compared it favourably to high-end options, while the majority verdict commented that the flavours were strong and tangy. The surprise package.



2/5

**Waitrose
Champagne
Blanc de
Blancs,
£24.99**

Our testers weren't particularly bowled over by this, with the impression that it tasted watery rather than having a very distinctive taste. We'd buy again, but it's quite average.



3/5

**Morrisons
M Signature
Champagne
Brut, £19**

This champers made a good impression but not a lasting one on our testers. Most found it had a great bubble factor and a sweet citrus taste, but a few found this to be a little overpowering.



3/5

**Co-op Les
Pionniers
Champagne,
£16.99**

Strong and sharp, while this had plenty of bubbles many of our testers weren't won over by its bold flavour. In fact, a certain number of our quaffers found it slightly on the sour side. An acquired taste.

best PROMOTION

SWEET temptations

Discover a world of sweet inspiration and irresistible ideas – once you've got Carte D'Or, you've got dessert!

Carte D'Or ice cream cocktail puddings



To make one serving, mix 100ml (3½fl oz) milk, 1tbsp spiced rum and 1tbsp coffee liqueur in a small jug. Chill. To serve, pour into a martini glass and scoop in a ball of Carte D'Or Gelateria Salted Caramel ice cream. Serve with chocolate-coated biscuits or wafer rolls and a spoon.



Ice cream sharing bowl

Half blow up a balloon, then tie and tape it, knot side down, into a small bowl or glass. Grease with softened butter and allow to cool. Pour over some melted dark chocolate to make a bowl shape. Chill to set, then brush over more melted dark chocolate and chill again. Repeat process 2 or 3 times, finishing with a drizzle of melted white chocolate. Pop the balloon and carefully peel it out. Fill with balls of Carte D'Or Rum & Raisin, Praline and Cinnamon Biscuit ice cream.



CARTE D'OR

Visit cartedorscoop.co.uk for further information on the Carte D'Or collection, including the Classic and Gelateria ranges.



Pampered tots



Mother-daughter bonding time

VICTORIA BECKHAM & HARPER, 4

Fashion designer Victoria, 41, loves treating little Harper to mummy and daughter manicures by celebrity nail technician Tom Bachik, who boasts Jennifer Lopez and Jennifer Aniston as A-list clients.

Victoria admitted, 'I'm very girlie and love nails. Harper and I often have nail afternoons.'

The singer-turned-fashion designer shared this adorable picture (below) of Harper on Twitter with the caption, 'Big girl having her nails done x.'

We think Harper's one lucky little girl!



Harper nails it in the salon

INSTAGRAM/@VICTORIABECKHAM

When we saw Victoria Beckham taking little Harper to a beauty salon, we spotted a new trend in celebrity kids



Honor showed off her colourful nails



After a night out with mum

JESSICA ALBA & HONOR, 7

Actress Jessica Alba, 34, is often spotted enjoying girlie grooming days with daughter Honor and says, 'It's good family bonding time.' The pair usually opt for matching mani and pedis. How cute!



TAMARA ECCLESTONE & SOPHIA, 19 MONTHS

Formula 1 heiress Tamara Ecclestone, 31, owns her own beauty salon *Show* and often shares snaps of her mummy and daughter pampering sessions. The latest was transforming daughter Sophia into *Frozen*'s Elsa.



BEYONCÉ & BLUE IVY, 3

Like mother, like daughter! Blue Ivy is often pictured on social media having pampering sessions with superstar mother Beyoncé,

34. The singer posted a snap of her and her mini me's perfectly manicured hands with the caption, 'Me and my Blue, and my Blue Blue, riding.'



Blue Ivy's favourite nail colour? Blue, of course!

INSTAGRAM/@BEYONCE



Celebration

Cinnamon wreath!



This makes a stunning centrepiece at the festive breakfast table or tea-time treat. It's essentially a big cinnamon bun with extra oomph

DOUGH

- 25g fresh yeast or 13g dried yeast
- 80g butter, melted
- 300ml whole milk, at room temperature
- 50g sugar
- 2tsp ground cardamom
- 375g white strong flour
- 80g rye flour
- ½tsp salt
- ½ beaten egg

FILLING

- 100g butter (spreadable)
- 3tsp ground cinnamon
- 1tsp ground cardamom
- 125g dark brown sugar
- 25g caster sugar
- 70g chopped toasted nuts, eg almonds and hazelnuts

TOPPING & BRUSHING

- ½ beaten egg mixed with a dash of milk, for brushing
- Syrup
- Icing sugar and warm water
- Piping bag fitted with a plain nozzle

SERVES 10-12

1 If using fresh yeast, pour the melted butter into the milk. The temperature should be between 36-37°C. Add the yeast and stir until dissolved. Pour into a mixing bowl.

2 If using dried yeast, heat the milk to 36-37°C and pour it into a bowl.

Sprinkle in the yeast granules and whisk together. Cover with clingfilm and leave in a warm place for 15 mins to activate. Pour the mixture into a mixing bowl.

3 Add the melted butter, sugar and cardamom and stir again. Add 250g strong flour and all the rye flour, salt and egg. Mix until everything is incorporated.

4 Work the dough until it almost stops sticking and has a shiny surface – about 5 mins with a mixer using a dough hook, or 10 mins by hand. The dough should only just reach the point of not being sticky. Leave to rise until it's doubled (around 40 mins).

5 To make the filling, put the softened butter, cinnamon, cardamom and sugars into a bowl and mix well.

6 Tip the dough out on a floured surface and work it with your hands, adding more flour, until you have a good, mouldable dough

that does not stick and can be rolled out. Cut the dough in half and roll each piece in a rectangular shape (around 50cm x 40cm). Spread the butter mixture evenly across the dough.

7 Add three-quarters of the chopped nuts across the surface. Roll the dough up lengthways so you end up with a long, tight roll. Place on a baking sheet and shape into a round circle, attaching the ends.

8 Using scissors, cut slices almost to the base. Spread each roll out to the side and flatten slightly until you have done the whole wreath. Ensure the wreath is quite flat. Let the wreath rest again for 30 mins under a clean dish towel.

9 Preheat the oven to 200°C/gas 6. Brush the wreath gently with the remaining egg/milk and bake in the preheated oven for 20-25 mins or until done.


10 Brush at once with a very thin layer of warmed syrup, then sprinkle over the rest of the nuts and keep under a damp dish towel until cooled a bit.

11 Once cooled, make the icing using a little icing sugar and a few drops of warm water and pipe over the wreath.

EXTRACTED FROM



The Scandi Kitchen (Ryland Peters & Small) by Bronte Aurell. Pick up a copy for the special price of £11.99 (usual rrp £16.99), including P&P, by calling 01256 302 699 and quoting the code EA4.



Single or not, Anthea Turner asks which of us can honestly say we've never had a 'bloody miserable Christmas?'

Dressing in Bridget Jones-style penguin pyjamas and singing *All By Myself* into a Christmas cracker, Anthea Turner proves once again – contrary to belief – that she has an incredibly good sense of humour about herself.

'I'm a BIG fan of Bridget Jones. Who doesn't love her? Absolutely, what a great film,' she grins.

'As for being like her... a night in wearing your jimjams, drinking red wine and watching anything with a happy ending is just as important as eating a Terry's Chocolate Orange or the orange chocs out of the Quality Street box, in my book.

'Now THAT makes me happy. I can't wait for the next Bridget Jones instalment.'

Asked how she feels about spending Christmas newly single (she divorced her hubby of 15 years, Grant Bovey, in October) or, as Bridget herself would call it, as a 'spinster', Anthea throws her eyes skywards.

'Oh, COME ON!' she chides. "Show me one woman in her fifties who hasn't had at least one bloody awful Christmas?

'I think it's something to do with "Great Expectations" – the TV ads, the magazines – everyone shouting at you, "Have a good Christmas. What are you doing for Christmas? Happy Holidays."

'And we do all try, and we do all want the perfect day – let's be honest, I even wrote a book called *The Perfect Christmas* – but unfortunately, at different points in our lives, it's just not consistent.

'Let's face it, for some people it just won't be nice. Maybe you've

just got a divorce, maybe you just lost your job, maybe you're ill or on your own – these things are always bad. But Christmas just puts any cracks in the mirror under a magnifying glass, and you think, "I'm a big fat loser!"

'Last year was a particularly bad Christmas for me. It was the first one I'd spent on my own. I remember being in Waitrose with my trolley and I cried.

'I called my sister Wendy, sobbing down the phone, "I don't want it to be Christmas. I just don't want to



Bridget Jones? I know how she feels!

*'We all want
the perfect day
but sometimes
it just doesn't
work out
like that'*

TURN
OVER FOR
MORE...





'Will I be doing a Bridget, singing All By Myself into a cracker?'



'Christmas puts any cracks under the magnifying glass'



PICTURE DIRECTION: TRACEY BALDWIN WORDS: SIOBHAN WYKES PICTURES: TONY WARD assisted by Gemma Ward. HAIR AND MAKE-UP: CLAUDIA BOVEY using BareMinerals and Louise Young

do this." So yes, I went home and did a Bridget Jones. I opened the wine! But you get through it, don't you?"

And Anthea is never a woman to feel sorry for herself for long.

'Don't make me out to be some sad case, for goodness' sake!' she warns. She then cites statistics from the Samaritans, which has a 17 per cent increase in calls on Christmas Day, and talks about the 100,000 children who, according to Shelter, will be homeless across Britain on the big day – the equivalent of four children for every school in the UK.

'So, as for me having the odd rubbish day, show me the woman who hasn't?'

'Why are we such a bunch of Mary Martyrs? We take it all on, don't we?'

The decorations, the cards [although, in keeping with her newly single status, Anthea is no longer sending out 200-plus family cards], the shopping, the wrapping, the cooking...!

'I have 100 per cent absolutely done those Christmases. One year, I had TWO dishwashers on constantly! I was exhausted. Grant kept thanking me for a lovely day, and inside I was fuming, "Of course you've had a lovely day. All you've done is serve the drinks!"' She laughs loudly at the memory.

So why do we do it to ourselves?

'Honestly, I don't know. We are the arbiters of our own destruction. None of us should be stupid enough to make our own cranberry sauce. Life is too short! All that time measuring bloody

STYLING: FIONA PARKHOUSE
Anthea's pyjamas, £11.85, Christmas Workshop @ ahoc.co.uk



cranberries and sugar...'

Then Anthea pauses. 'It's hateful to generalise but, if it was up to men, I don't think Baby Jesus' birthday would happen. At best, it would consist of a full English breakfast, then straight down the pub.'

'As for Christmas cards – 54p for a second-class stamp? Men would just never send a card. They'd be thinking, "This is all getting too much now!"'

Anthea starts laughing again. 'Still, it brings it all into perspective, doesn't it?'

And, as with most of us, not all her Christmas memories are bad – in fact, some, she goes as far to say, were magical.

"One year, Grant and I took the three girls (her stepdaughters, Lily, now 23, Amelia, 22, and Claudia, 19) to Lapland for three days. Claudia was seven at the time and it was brilliant,' she recalls with sparkling eyes.

'Claudia met Santa and all doubt of his existence was removed. To be honest, *I* came back believing in Santa, never mind Claudia.'

So, has the 'Perfect Housewife' picked up any tips over the years for making Christmas easier – apart from not bothering to make her own cranberry sauce?

'Yes! My mum has a brilliant one. She always asks her guests to bring something. Don't be afraid to accept offers of help. Don't insist that "It's all under control." Say, "Thank you. You bring mince pies, you bring pudding." Even your nephew can manage to bring the After Eights.

'The first rule of management is delegation – so delegate. That is actually the way to do it.'

So, how will Anthea be spending this Christmas? All by herself in red PJs, watching slushy romcoms?

'Too early to say,' she laughs. 'Maybe I will go for a jimjams lock-in with friends and an M&S ready-cooked Christmas dinner – although I will make the potatoes. I'll pit anyone's roast potatoes against mine – and I will win.'

It sounds like the perfect Christmas, actually – can we come?



The latest hair tools for the best Christmas party looks

WE
ASKED
*STRICTLY COME
DANCING'S* TOP
HAIR STYLIST,
LISA DAVEY, FOR
TIPS ON CREATING
NEW SEASON
STYLES



Invested in a gadget but not sure what to do with it? We feel your pain! Here, Lisa tries out six products to demonstrate how to get the best out of them.

The look **big curls**

A step up from the traditional roller, 18 'pods' create the same effect. Stored in a circular chamber, the clear casing allows them to remain at an optimum temperature.

LISA'S TIPS: The rubber insides conduct heat well and grip without tangling. Gently pull apart the pod and place a section of hair in the middle. Roll up to the root and close the pod to secure. Wait until the rollers are cold before removing to ensure the curl sets in place and doesn't drop. Pop these in before you do your make-up as they take time to cool down. A quick blast with the cool shot of your hairdryer speeds this up.



BABYLISS CURL
PODS, £80



The look straight and sleek

Larger than your average straighteners, these are 4cm wide (the average are around 2.5cm), and 1cm longer than the industry standard. They're also ionic, minimising any signs of frizz.

LISA'S TIPS: A sign of a good pair of

straighteners is when you don't have to go over a section of hair more than once to smooth it. These do the job in one go. The wider plates mean they're also quicker to use. They glide easily from root to tip with no pulling or dragging, so any risk of damage is minimal. Ensure your hair is bone-dry before using them, then take a 2in section and comb smooth before straightening.



**H2D V1 WIDE
STYLER, £99**



The look loose waves

The self-rotating wand means less hand/arm work for you, enabling the hair to twist to create shape. The barrel features a small gap through the middle, taking

the place of a traditional tong clamp, to feed the hair through. The digital temperature allows you to control the heat up to 230°C.

LISA'S TIPS: This is better at creating relaxed waves than fully defined ringlets. No curl is created the same with this wand, so if you're looking for a consistent style, this probably isn't the right tool. Take sections above your head as you curl to avoid your hair falling out of the gap. Feed the ends through the middle, press down the button so it starts rotating up to your roots, hold in place for around five seconds, then release. Start at the back and make your way to the front.

**REMINGTON
CURL
REVOLUTION,
£89.99**



The look twisted braids

A cordless, battery-powered tool twists tresses to create a simple, braided effect using two rotating prongs to spin the hair around. The box comes with clear, small bands to tie the ends.

LISA'S TIPS: Takes a bit of practice

but once you've got the hang of it, you can achieve pretty updos very easily and be quite creative with it. You can vary the section sizes depending on how chunky you want your twists. To create a chunkier style, take two thin sections of hair and place each one under the red hooks. Switch on the first setting to spin each strand, stopping about 1-2cm before the end so they don't come loose from the gadget. Then turn on the second setting to combine both sections into one big braid, tying at the bottom. Pin at the back, underneath the top layer of hair at the crown, to hide wispy ends.



**SCUNCI
INSTANTWIST,
£30**



The look disco curls

This looks the most unconventional of all our tools. The giant clamp allows you to create waves by pressing down on each section from root to tip.

LISA'S TIPS: Take a section of hair and, starting at the root, secure within the clamp

for a few seconds before releasing. Continue this down the length until you reach the ends, and you'll be left with identical waves. The key to this is ensuring your sections are large, not small, or it'll look crimped instead of curled. Once you've finished, run your fingers through to separate out. Don't use a brush or comb because you'll lose definition and it can become static.



**DIVA BIG
WAVES, £59.99**

‘I could have saved her’

Jadine Dunning, 24, is haunted by the murder of her best friend's sister

This was a crime that shocked the nation. Teenager Georgia Williams was lured to the home of her friend, Jamie Reynolds, where he hanged her to satisfy his twisted fantasies.

Reynolds, 24, who had been accessing online porn and snuff movies from the age of 14, tricked the pretty 17-year-old into posing with a noose around her neck for a ‘photography project’ he was working on. He then kicked the box from underneath her feet and watched the teenager fight for her life before taking pictures of her dead body.

The details of Georgia's death in May 2013 have devastated her loved ones, as well as the wider Telford community, where the air cadet was known for her outgoing personality and kind nature.

Even more shocking, though, was the fact that Reynolds had been allowed to slip through the police net.

In 2008 he had tried to strangle another a female college friend, but



Air cadet Georgia Williams was full of life

West Mercia Police let him off with a warning. This was despite his own mother and stepfather handing over disturbing images they'd found on their son's laptop that depicted female school friends with nooses round their necks.

Shockingly, the pictures weren't shown to his potential victims until he

was arrested for Georgia's murder.

Jadine Dunning, 24, who was best friends with Georgia's older sister, Scarlett, featured in one of the photos.

Speaking out with Georgia's mum's blessing, Jadine says, ‘It had been taken at school – I was in my uniform – but had been altered to include a red noose

around my neck, red lipstick and bulging eyes, like I was being hanged. It was blatantly sexual and horrifying.’

Jadine says she is now haunted by the fact that, had she known about the photos earlier, she could have warned Georgia away from Reynolds.

The mum-of-one says, ‘I was left to continue socialising in the same places as Jamie, totally

A FAMILY RIPPED APART



Jadine (second from right) recalls joining the Williamses on a family holiday 10 years ago



Georgia (left) was so close to dad Steve and sister Scarlett



Chilling: Georgia with the 'friend' who brutally killed her



Tributes at the football ground of Telford United, where Georgia was a volunteer

HOW DID IT COME TO THIS?



The teenager's body was found five days after her death

Sentencing Reynolds, Mr Justice Wilkie said that he 'had the potential to progress to becoming a serial killer'.

More than 16,000 images and 72 videos depicting extreme violence against women were found on his PC.

He had also written a series of violent stories including one, *Georgia's Surprise*, in which he imagined watching her body 'dance' as she died by hanging.

Last month, an inquiry by Devon and Cornwall Police showed that police failings had allowed Reynolds to slip through the net.

Jadine is adamant that the police could have prevented her death.

She says, 'It's been heart-wrenching to find out how the authorities made so many major mistakes, and I felt I had to speak out so this doesn't happen again.'

'Georgia was such a loving girl - she would do anything for anyone. Her family are absolutely broken.'

'We've started up a trust in her name to give grants to young people aged 17 and 18, so that they can get into healthy activities that keep them from living their lives solely online.'

'Georgia had a bucket list, and one of the things on it was that she wanted to save a life.'

'Between Lynnette, Steve and me, I believe we can help her do just that.'

● To find out more about Georgia's legacy, visit thegeorgiawilliams.org

become. He was just a face in the crowd.'

Georgia had been friends with Reynolds for two years when she went missing.

Jadine says, 'The first I knew about her disappearance was from a radio news report.'

'I called Scarlett to see if she was OK, but of course the family were desperately phoning around Georgia's friends to see if they'd heard from her.'

'It wasn't like her to go off on her own and not keep in touch.'

'Seeing Scarlett in so much pain was unbearable, and Georgia's dad was just unrecognisable. Her mum was trying to be strong for the rest of them, but she was in pieces, too.'

Reynolds dumped Georgia's body in woodland 50 miles from her home.

He coldly texted friends and family from Georgia's mobile to throw police off the scent but he was arrested after a tip-off while on the run in Glasgow.

In December 2013, he appeared at Stafford Crown Court accused of her murder. He pleaded guilty and was given a whole-life sentence, meaning he'll never be released.

unaware of what he was like.

'If I'd known about that photo, of course I'd have told Scarlett, and Georgia would probably still be with us today.'

Jadine had known Georgia since childhood. The Williamses' house was her second home growing up, and she often went on holiday with Scarlett, Georgia and their parents Steve, a police officer, and Lynnette.

Jadine says, 'Georgia was the annoying little sister back then - always wanting to hang around with us - but she was such a sweet and caring girl.'

It was around this time that Jadine also first encountered Jamie Reynolds.

Jadine says, 'He was in my year, and was someone I'd speak to every day. Later, after Scarlett and I left school, he became part of Georgia's circle of friends.'

'For the most part he was very quiet. I do remember thinking he was a bit odd, but there was no sign of what he'd

THIS WEEK...

Cashback Queen



With Dragons' Den's
Sarah Willingham

A 64GB
smartphone
can hold around
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songs

Digital downloads

*Make sure you're covered
this Christmas*

HOME INSURANCE

Smartphones are expensive, and when you add the cost of all your apps, downloaded music, films or books, it could easily increase their value by hundreds. If you lose your phone or tablet, or it gets stolen, those downloads could be gone forever. Even if you have gadget insurance, the policy will probably only cover the handset itself, not the masses of content you have stored on it, so beware!

A recent study by *Which?* showed that only four providers of digital music – HMV Digital, Play.com, 7digital and Tesco Entertainment – will allow their customers to re-download any lost tracks. Insurers handle digital download insurance differently, so it's important to shop around and read the small print.

The wording can contain loopholes, and there's a wide variation in the level of cover available, ranging from £150 to £10,000. Typically, most have a policy limit of between £500 and £1,000.

The average
person owns
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FAULTY DOWNLOADS

Just like other purchases, under the Consumer Rights Act you have rights over anything you've downloaded or streamed – apps, music, ebooks or TV. Products must be 'as described by the seller', 'of satisfactory quality', and 'fit for a particular purpose'. If they don't conform to these criteria and develop faults, you have the right to have them repaired or replaced. The retailer has one chance to repair or replace faulty content before you can claim a refund and must also compensate you if any device or other digital content you own is damaged as a result of faulty content you've downloaded. Changed your mind? Contact the seller within 14 days to ask if they'll give a refund.

ALTERNATIVE WAYS TO PROTECT YOUR STUFF

The best protection is to back up your data regularly and check your home insurance policy, but a fairly cheap alternative is using an external hard drive. Memory tends to get cheaper each year, and you can now buy an external hard drive with 500GB of storage space for less than £50. Some hard drives come in at as little as £69 for almost 1 terabyte of storage (1,000GB). PC World also usually offers cashback deals, but shop around before you buy, using sites like pricerunner.co.uk.

CLOUDS

Clouds offer another way to save your data (photos, documents or music) so that, if you lose or damage your phone or tablet, you still have your data

backed up on someone else's servers. That way, you'll be able to download it all again from your purchase history at no extra cost.

The most widely known cloud is Apple's iCloud, which protects anything downloaded from iTunes on an iPhone, iPod or iPad. However, Google Drive, OneDrive and Dropbox are also growing in popularity. Most cloud services will give you a free allowance, which is usually fairly generous – but, once you're at your limit, you'll have to pay for extended storage. Google Drive and OneDrive are the best options, offering 15GB of free storage. iCloud offers 5GB and Dropbox 2GB. However,

Dropbox gives you an extra 500MB of storage each time you get a friend to sign up, and you can earn up to 16GB through referrals on social media and elsewhere.

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ALL FROM WYEEVALE

Merry & bright

Add a kitsch twist with cute and quirky baubles. A flash of blue and turquoise will also transform your tree for 2015.



Glass bird decorations,
£4.99, Dunelm



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B&Q



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Turquoise drop,
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Ski lady,
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Festive dog
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FOR MORE...

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- Snowman, £8

ALL FROM HOUSE OF FRASER



Glass unicorn,
£7.50,
Paperchase



Pale pink, £6.50
for two, Ikea



Star, £5,
M&S



Pink, £5 for 3,
Tesco



Silver,
£5, BHS

Dove, £4.50, The
Contemporary Home

Tiara, £1.75 each,
The Contemporary
Home

Vintage sparkle

Sugary pastels with a touch
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a frosty tree.

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ALL FROM WYEEVALE



Midnight frost

Mix deep purple with metallics for a dramatic and glamorous look.



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Large onion, £2, Tesco



Silver hanging star, £8, The Contemporary Home



Tear drop, £15 for 6, M&S



Glass, £4.99, Dobbies



Purple metallic, £2, Next



FEATURE: LARA NUGENT

Tree, £20
Midnight tree decorations, £1.50
3D star decoration, £4, for 2
Silver decoration pack, £10 for 50
Snowflake bead bauble, £3.50, for 4
Silver and purple dove, £2
Glitter star, £3 for 9

ALL FROM TESCO



Stole, £21, New Look

Transform
your winter
coat from day
to night



Shrug, £69,
Damsel
In A Dress



Cover-up,
£79, Coast



Sequin
scarf, £14,
Very

Jacket, £110,
Blush zip skirt, £35,
Peplum top, £35,
Simply Be

Wrap up well this Christmas

Feather shrug,
£56, No1 Jenny
Packham for
Debenhams



A CLASSY COVER-UP WILL MAKE
YOU LOOK PARTY PERFECT OVER
THE FESTIVE SEASON

This crop
style looks
perfect over a
classic LBD



Wrap,
£35,
Coast



Bolero, £49, Star by Julian
Macdonald at Debenhams



Cape, £30,
very.co.uk



A good quality faux fur jacket will last for years



Capelet, **£35**, M&S

Full scarf, **£49**, Coast



Crop jacket, **£65**, M&Co

Wear over a tailored jacket or trouser suit



Gilet, **£199**, Mint Velvet



Sequin cape, **£29.50**, M&S



Faux fur collar, **£12.50**, very.co.uk



Sequin cardigan, **£45**, Nine by Savannah Miller at Debenhams

FEATURE: LARA NUGENT



The party season is creeping up but there's still time to look and feel great with our easy, seven-day, little black dress eating plan

We know this time of year is one long round of shopping and cooking – with a little partying thrown in, that's why our eating plan is designed to fit around you. Based on a calorie count of around 1,300 a day, our tasty diet is packed full of energy-boosting complex carbohydrate foods that release sugar slowly into your system helping to minimise hunger pangs and keep you on top when you need your energy most. Simply choose a breakfast, lunch and supper option each day, plus a festive snack, then repeat the week until you reach your party dress goal. Easy!

EACH DAY

- 275ml skimmed milk each day, to use in recipes and drinks
- Unlimited water or fruit teas

7 WIDE AWAKE BREAKFASTS



Choose one each day:

- 1 small bowl **unsweetened muesli or granola**, handful **blueberries**, 1tbsp **Greek yoghurt**.
- Hangover smoothie: Blend the juice of 1 large **orange** with 1 large **ripe banana**, 160ml **semi skimmed milk**, 85g live **natural yoghurt**, 1tsp **clear honey** and sprinkling of **cinnamon**.
- Fruity porridge: 60g **oats** made with milk from allowance. Top with 4 **apricots**. 1 large glass **unsweetened cranberry juice**.
- 1 **blueberry or cranberry muffin**. Small bunch **seedless grapes**. 1 large glass

unsweetened orange juice.

- ½ **ruby red grapefruit**. 1 small **free-range egg**, poached on 1 slice **wholemeal toast**.
- Festive fruit bowl: 2 **satsumas**, 1 **apple**, 1 **kiwi**, peeled and segmented or cut into slices, handful of **seedless grapes** and 1tbsp chopped **mixed nuts**. Drizzle with 1tbsp **juice** and top with 2tbsp **fromage frais**.
- 1 **wholemeal bagel**, toasted and halved, spread with 1tbsp **low-fat cream cheese** and topped with 2 slices **smoked salmon**.



THE LBD

Drop two sizes in 7 days

3 EASY LBD EATING TIPS

- Eat **Edam**, **Brie** and **goat's cheese**, which have an average 85 cals per 25g, instead of **Cheddar** and **Stilton**.
- Swap **crisps** and **salted peanuts**, both high in calories and salt, for low-fat, low-calorie **olives** – 3 cals each – and **breadsticks**, 25 cals each.
- Apparently, we drink 60 per cent more slowly from a straight glass than a curved one, as we see what we're drinking! Top dry **white wine** with **fizzy water** and **ice cubes** so it lasts longer.

EASY PLAN

to dress
ix weeks!

7 FEELING FESTIVE LUNCHES

Choose one each day:

- Open sandwich made with 1 slice **wholemeal bread**, spread with **low-fat spread**, 2 slices wafer thin **turkey**, 1tsp **cranberry sauce**.

- 1 medium-size **jacket potato**, topped with 2tbsp reduced-calorie **prawn salad**. 2 **cherry tomatoes**. Handful **grapes**.

- 1 **wholemeal pitta**, filled with 85g **salt beef** or **roast beef** slices and 1tbsp reduced-calorie **coleslaw**, **salad leaves** and **cherry tomato slices**.

- 2 large **oatcakes** topped with 1 small tub **cottage cheese** with **pineapple**. 1 **pear**.



- Mix 100g **chicken breast**, shredded, 1 stick **celery**, 1 **green apple**, 6 **walnut halves**, all chopped, 1tbsp reduced-calorie **mayo**, and 1tbsp **low-fat yoghurt**. 1 **wholemeal pitta bread**.

- 1 **baked potato**, filled with ½ **small onion**, chopped and 1 **tomato**, topped with 30g **mozzarella**, grilled until brown.

Serve with ½ bag mixed salad leaves drizzled with 1tsp **oil-free dressing**.

- 1 small **wholemeal wrap** filled with shredded **lettuce**, 2tbsp **prawns**, **tomato** and **red onion** slices, 1tsp **low-fat mayo**.

7 SUPER SATISFYING SUPPERS

Choose one each day:

- **Tomato & mushroom pasta:**

Pan fry ½ small **onion** in 1tsp olive oil with 1 **clove garlic**, crushed for 3 mins. Add 1 small can chopped **tomatoes** with **herbs** and simmer for 5 mins. Add 4 **mushrooms**, sliced. Serve with 3tbsp cooked weight **wholemeal penne**, 1tsp **Parmesan**.

- Grill 1 small **lamb chop**, brushed with 1tsp **olive oil**. Serve with 3 small **potatoes**, 1 small can **ratatouille**.

- 1 medium **salmon fillet**, brushed with **olive oil** and grilled. Serve with 3tbsp cooked weight **couscous**, ½ bag **salad leaves**, drizzled with 1tsp **oil-free dressing**.

- **Pineapple & prawn curry:** Fry ½ small **onion** in 1tsp olive oil until soft, add 1tbsp mango chutney, 1 crushed **clove garlic**, 1tsp **lemon juice**, and 1tsp **mild curry powder**. Add 1 small can **chopped tomatoes**



and simmer for 5 mins.

Stir in 2tbsp cubed **pineapple**, 3tbsp cooked **prawns**. Serve with 3tbsp cooked weight **brown rice**.

- 1 **turkey breast** brushed with **olive oil** pan fried in 1tsp olive oil. Serve with 2 small **potatoes** and 3tbsp each **mange tout** and **sweetcorn**.

- 1 small **fillet steak** pan-fried. Serve with 3 each **grilled tomatoes** and **mushrooms**. ½ bag **salad leaves** drizzled with 1tsp **oil-free dressing**.

- 1 **smoked mackerel** fillet served with 2tsp reduced-calorie **potato salad**, ½ bag **salad leaves** drizzled with 1tsp **oil-free dressing**.

‘My 10-year fight

Catherine Simpson, 52, struggled to cope with her daughter’s disruptive behaviour – but an unexpected diagnosis unlocked her child’s heart

Lots of new mums struggle to adjust to life as a parent, but Catherine Simpson found the change in lifestyle particularly hard.

Not only did she go from working full-time for a charity to being at home all day with her baby, Nina, but her daughter wouldn’t stop crying – ever.

Despite being regularly fed, changed and taken to the doctors, baby Nina remained inconsolable. And, as other mums established a routine with their little one, Catherine was left in despair.

‘It was so awful and because I was sleep-deprived, it felt so much worse,’ remembers Catherine. ‘Nothing I did would comfort her and I felt like a terrible mum.’

‘I’d got close to other mums during pregnancy classes and, when she was born, I started to go to the mother and toddler groups. But when Nina cried continually, my friends dropped away.’

‘Even when Nina was quiet, I’d have to keep her on my lap because she screamed if I put her on the floor. Everyone else would wander off to get a cup of tea and I’d be left behind.’

Eventually, Catherine stopped going to the groups

and became more and more isolated as she struggled to find answers to her daughter’s behaviour.

She recalls, ‘I took Nina to the doctors all the time. At first, they said she was a healthy baby and they often didn’t sleep. Then, when I was referred to an autism psychologist, I was told I had to be firmer with her. But I didn’t see a naughty child in front of me, I saw a little girl who looked terrified by life.’

However Catherine, who had fallen pregnant again to husband Marcello Mega when Nina was 18 months old, was so desperate she tried everything.

Following the psychologist’s advice, she ignored Nina’s cries and introduced a ‘naughty step’. But this didn’t help and, by the time the couple’s second child, Lara, now 17, was born, Nina was just as troubled.

As the two grew up, Nina had a hard time during primary school and started to lash out at Lara, who learnt how to stay out of her big sister’s way. She’d throw tantrums if her parents interrupted her reading and would throw food that she didn’t like.

‘I had no idea how to cope,’ Catherine admits. ‘One day, I was at the shops and trying to ignore Nina’s screams against all of my instincts when a woman told me that I was an unfit mother. I cried for two days.’

‘Each day, I’d pray that this would be the day everything changed; the day Nina behaved like other girls her age.’

But it wasn’t until Nina was 10 that she was eventually diagnosed with Asperger’s syndrome, and Catherine finally got the support she desperately needed.



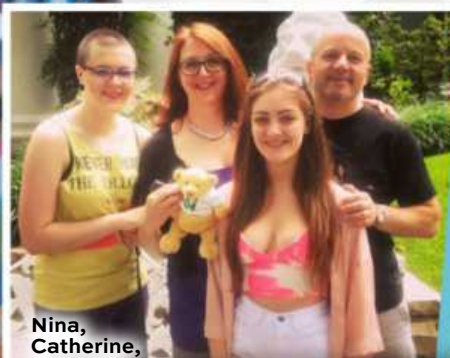
Catherine struggled with Nina’s behaviour from day one

HIDDEN DISABILITY

As a toddler, Nina couldn’t leave her mum’s side without crying

Catherine had no idea why her daughter wasn’t like other children

ht for answers'



Nina,
Catherine,
Lara and
Marcello



Nina has
flourished and
has inspired
Catherine to
write a book

FAMILY SUPPORT

'Everything clicked into place,' says Catherine.

'She wasn't disobedient, she just couldn't cope with social situations. And her senses were heightened, so when I tried to serve her things like boiled eggs, the smell would be too much.

'That understanding changed things immediately. The psychiatrist even gave her treatment to help Nina sleep properly.'

But despite the diagnosis, they still struggled to help Nina fit in with her peers.

When Nina moved to secondary school, she was bullied badly. When she told her teacher she couldn't cope with the noise in the playground, she was instructed to sit outside the office – usually a punishment for naughty children.

When the bullying turned physical and Nina, then 14, was pushed down the stairs, Catherine and Marcello put their daughter in a smaller, private school, whose ethos focused on inclusion.

It was the beginning of a new life for them all.

'She fitted in straight away,'

Catherine says.

'She was calmer and discovered a new love for her lessons, especially German.

'Because she was happier, she became more relaxed at home, and she and Lara became closer. They started to laugh together, which was amazing to see. And Nina became far more interested in talking to us about the things she'd learnt at school.'

Nina's confidence grew and, by the time she turned 18, she was confident enough to continue her studies at university. Now, she is working as a teaching assistant in a small German town as part of her course.

'It's such a brave step for her and I'm so proud of her,' says Catherine.

'It's so fantastic to see Nina flourish. We speak to her every week and she's doing really well. She's happy to talk about Asperger's and autism to raise awareness. I have also written a book called *Truestory*, based on our experience. If more people understood this condition, it would help sufferers and their families.'

● *Truestory* by Catherine Simpson is published by Sandstone Press and costs £8.99

THE *entertainment* edit

Pick of the week's TV...



Wednesday, 8pm,
Sky Movies Christmas

Miracle On 34th Street

Sky gets into the festive spirit by dedicating an entire channel to all-time Christmas classics. So if you want to immerse yourself in the festive spirit, what's better than watching the late, great Richard Attenborough as Santa? It's followed at 10pm by *Gremlins*, all you need now is some mulled wine and a mince pie or two.



NEW
SERIES

Wednesday, 9pm,
Channel 5

New Lives In The Wild UK

Ben Fogle's new series follows those who have escaped the rat race. He begins with the Mason family, who six years ago gave up their London council house in favour of four acres of overgrown agricultural land in Devon and the idea of living in a horse box... It takes all sorts.



I'm A Celebrity... Get Me Out Of Here!

Ant 'n' Dec are back in Oz and it's almost time for the big reveal. Who's in the jungle this year? Rumours so far include *X Factor* winner James Arthur, *Emmerdale* actress Gemma Oaten and ex-TV chef Rustie Lee. But whoever it is ITV, please don't make us sit through another two-minute visit from Katie Price or Gemma Collins managing five minutes at a bushtucker trial...

Sunday, 9pm, ITV



NEW
SERIES

Tuesday, 8pm,
BBC Two

MasterChef: The Professionals

Six aspiring chefs compete to make a French floating island dessert or a blue steak with a green peppercorn sauce in just 15 minutes. Judges Monica Galetti, Gregg Wallace and Marcus Wareing look on, but which three will be asked to go home?



Friday, 7.30pm, BBC One

Children In Need

Sir Terry kick-starts another live evening of entertaining for Children In Need. The *Call The Midwife* cast take to the dance floor for a *Strictly* special, the *EastEnders* crew perform a Hollywood-style musical, and there are live performances from Rod Stewart and Ellie Goulding.

Dementia? I'd rather be hit by a bus!



Ashley finds the news hard to take

Prepare for heartache. *Emmerdale* will never be the same again after the news that vicar Ashley Thomas has dementia

Actor John Middleton, 62, who plays our favourite soap rev, talks about Ashley's shock diagnosis and reveals how he feels about leaving the Dales after 19 years...

What do you think about this devastating storyline, especially over Christmas?

I've known for a year. I had a meeting with the producer and she said, 'You probably want to have time to think about it,' and I said, 'Actually, no, this is the best story I've ever been given.'

How would you feel in Ashley's shoes?

I'd rather be hit by a bus if I'm frank. But I've said, let's be brave about it and explore the ugly side. I think that's important to do, as



Emmerdale, weekdays, 7pm, ITV

there's a personality change and people can become nasty and unpleasant.

So why does Ashley have long hair at the moment?

It was my wife's idea, nothing to do with dementia! She said, 'You'd look good like that. Why don't you grow your hair?' So I do what I'm told! But I have to be careful. I could end up looking like Ken Dodd!

How do your own children

feel about Ashley's story?

I've been in the show so long that my kids have grown up watching me portray various things. My eldest is 32 and my youngest is 26, and they're teasing me, 'What's that, Dad? Mild cognitive impairment? I'll watch for that!' But eventually they might find it difficult, as ultimately there's only one



The vicar tries to keep his dementia secret from his family

way out for this story. I've advised my mother not to watch.

Do you know anybody with dementia?

There's no one in my close family, but I've done research. My uncle died in a home in Lincolnshire and he had a form of dementia and I chatted to nurses

there. There's also a lovely home I visited near Ilkley, which is run by the Methodist Homes for the Aged. It has a dementia wing and I've met people in there...

Are you sad to be leaving?

I find it incredibly exciting and it actually makes me feel younger.

Every year when I sign my contract, I think, 'Should I get back out there? Is this just me being lazy?' I'm not sure when exactly I'll leave, but I'm ready.

Will we see you in the jungle or on Strictly?

I'm saying a firm no now, but in a year's time I may think, 'Oh, crikey, I need some money!' The best-laid plans and all that!



Rather than tell partner Harriet the truth, he tells her he's leaving her

Long-lasting protection? It's a Sure thing



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Sure Compressed (125ml) is smaller in size than the regular Sure (250ml), but gives exactly the same level of protection to keep you fresh and dry all day long.

With half the gas, the smaller, smarter can has a softer spray than the large, but will last just as long when sprayed for

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Less packaging makes Sure Compressed more environmentally friendly, while Motionsense™ technology means every time you move, the friction breaks capsules to release a burst of freshness, so the more you move, the more it protects.

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**SURE
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Make that 'just out of the shower' fresh feeling last all day with one of these little beauties.



All Sure Compressed antiperspirant variants are available at all leading retailers nationwide (125ml retails at RRP £3.29***).

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Kantar Worldpanel data UK individuals and IE HHs of Compressed deo purchases 02/2013-08/2015. * all prices are at sole discretion of the retailer.

We all have a darker side...

Ex-*Corrie* star Natalie Gumede, 31, opens up about her role as Bella in the controversial series *Jekyll And Hyde*

Tell us about *Jekyll And Hyde* and your role in it...

We are all fascinated by *Jekyll and Hyde*, aren't we? It's because all of us have two sides – we are all drawn to a darker side. Robert Jekyll comes to London from India and turns into Hyde in a seedy East End pub called The Empire, where Bella Charming is the landlady. She's your typical bad girl and runs a gang on the side, so she's more than a match for the supercharged Hyde.

Is there plenty of trouble once Hyde enters her life?

Plenty! Hyde literally crashes into her world and turns it upside down. But she's a feisty woman who can deck a sailor! Bella is beautiful, dangerous, clever and falls hard for Hyde's dangerous charms.

What happened after Hyde got injured in a fight?

He wakes up three days later as Robert, with a totally different character. He's meek, mild, polite and introverted. Bella mainly sees Hyde and there's something

about him and his dual aspect that keeps her coming back for more.

What's Tom Bateman (Robert Jekyll) like?

It's been a pleasure. Tom's so laid-back, I think a lot of people are going to be really charmed by him.

Having two sides is a theme in the series. How does that manifest itself in Bella?

Bella is brassy and runs a bar full of layabouts, drunkards, thieves and drug dealers. But she's never let her guard down. Hyde is the first person to get under her skin – so suddenly you see a vulnerable side.

As *Corrie*'s Kirsty Soames, you had two sides, too...

Kirsty made me realise what I'm strongest at; it's the type of role that suits me. It's not a reflection of me, though. It's just by realising your strengths and playing to them, you hopefully get more work! I'm strongest at the feisty women with a dark underbelly.

Can you tell us about your kick-boxing scene?

It involves thugs who descend on Bella's bar, and it was very adrenalin-fuelled. But I'm not as fit as I thought! My kicks started at a reasonable height, and then gradually got lower and lower as the day wore on!

Jekyll And Hyde, Sunday, 7pm, ITV



Natalie in action as the kick-boxing Bella



'Misunderstood' mentor Simon with Max

'I feel accepted,' says Max, about the show's affect on him

The X
Factor,
Sat & Sun,
8pm, ITV

If the bullies could see me now!

Even mentor Simon Cowell called *X Factor* overs contestant Max Stone, 27, 'half dead' during auditions, but his chronic shyness hides a troubled past...

Max Stone fell in with the wrong crowd to escape the school bullies but he's putting it all behind him now. Here he opens up about his past...

On being bullied...

I was picked on for years as I was different [Max was born in Sweden], so I learned how to tone down my personality. I worried about being accepted, I spent my childhood trying to be someone else.

On lashing out...

I started hanging out with the wrong friends and

fighting a lot. It got worse and worse. I got depressed. It got dark. I got to the point where I thought there was no hope. There was a time in my teens where I cut my arms a little bit. It was a plea for attention.

On his shyness...

I worried the public wouldn't accept me but they did and Simon brought me back. He's apologised profusely for that, both in public and in private. The reaction from the crowd was so important for me. I've been really emotional and overwhelmed by the

support. I feel accepted.

Three words on Simon...

Misunderstood, powerful and influential.

On the house...

I was really worried about living with loads of people, I thought there'd be clashes but everyone is genuinely getting along. Anton [Stephans] is my best mate in the house. We connect on a personal level. We're complete opposites, he's energetic and I'm chilled but we balance.

On his girlfriend...

We've been together for four-and-a-half years.

I reassure her every day that I'm not going to cheat but Eleanor worries I'm going to change. I won't. When I'm singing a love song, I'll make sure she knows I'm singing it for her.

On his fantasy dinner party guests...

I would invite Jack White as I'd love to work with him. I'd have Danger Mouse [producer] as he's one of the best producers for creating new sounds, he is amazing. John Lennon! Simon, 100 per cent. Lastly, James Brown, as we'd have an interesting conversation.

Gordon Ramsay taught me all I know

US star Bradley Cooper, 40, cooks up a storm as a top London chef in his new film *Burnt*

You play chef Adam James in *Burnt*, but how much cooking do you do on screen?

Adam is a two-star Michelin chef who's longing for that third. The role was pretty intense and a challenge that I had to get stuck into. We tried to be authentic so all the cooking you see is done by me and the other actors!

Have you ever worked in a restaurant before?

Yes. I come from an Italian family so food has always been an important part of my life! I also worked in restaurants to support myself growing up, so I wanted to know how it felt to be in the kitchen at such a higher level.

Is it true Gordon Ramsay was your mentor?

Yes. I learnt a tremendous amount from him – he's taught me so many great skills. And Clare Smyth, who is a three-star chef at Ramsays in Hospital Road, London. It was invaluable!

In one scene, Adam throws everyone out of

his kitchen. Did Gordon's tantrums inspire you?

Absolutely. I spent time with him and Marco Pierre White – they are both mythical figures in this city. It was a pleasure to learn from them.

How was it reuniting with Sienna Miller in the film?

It was great to work with Sienna again! She's so talented. She worked closely with chef Marcus Wareing for the role and turned out to be a talent in the kitchen. I love being on screen with her.

How did you rate *Good Morning Britain's* Charlotte Hawkins' cameo?

She was fantastic, she's a natural.



Charlotte (left) does her star turn with Bradley

Chef Adam is in London to rebuild his name



Burnt (Rated 15)

Disgraced Michelin chef Adam Jones (Cooper), has destroyed his career and reputation at a highly respected restaurant in Paris thanks to his hardcore party lifestyle and addictions. Two years sober, and determined to get his third Michelin star, Adam moves to London in search of a new kitchen to run. He recruits Helene (Sienna Miller) – a talented sous chef, who not only transforms his kitchen, but also his personal life. But as the pressure mounts, even Adam begins to wonder if he can reclaim his former glory or if he is simply *burnt* out.

RATING ****



Perfect ways to wrap

Give your gifts an
extra special finish
this year with these
beautiful ideas



1 Paper and bow, **£10 (part of a pack)**, BHS
Ribbon, **£3.50**, tch.net
Tag, **£2.50 for 3**, Paperchase



2



5 Paper, **£4**, John Lewis
Ribbon, **£1.95**, notonthehighstreet.com



6



9 Paper, **£1.75**, Ikea
Ribbon, **£1.75**, Paperchase
Bow, **£6.50 for 3**, John Lewis
Tag, **£2**, George at Asda



10



A budget bauble makes a great tag!

Paper, **£8.99 for 2**, WHSmith
Bauble, **£1.40**, B&Q
Ribbon, **£1.05**, Hobbycraft



3 Paper, **£2**, Hobbycraft
Candy cane, **£1.50**, Sainsbury's
Ribbon, **£4**, tch.net
Tag, **£1.95**, notonthehighstreet.com



4 Paper, **£1.75**, Ikea
Pom pom, string and tag, **£2**, Matalan



Paper, **£8.99**, WHSmith
Bow, **£5**, John Lewis



7 Ribbon, **£4**, notonthehighstreet.com
Gift tag, **£23**, Matalan



8 Paper, **£5**, Paperchase
Tag, **£4.50**, notonthehighstreet.com
Ribbon, **£4**, tch.net



Best buy bow pack

Paper, **£6.50**
(part of a pack), Next
Bows, **£1 for 25**, Asda



11 Paper, **£4**, John Lewis
Ribbon, **£8** (part of a pack), John Lewis
Tag, **£3**, Hobbycraft



12 Paper, **£8**, M&S
Ribbon, **£5.95**, wildandwolf.com
Tag, **£1 for 10**, Ikea



'Tis the Season



Make your
front door
stand out with
a unique DIY
wreath

to be crafty!

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FROM HOBBYCRAFT

88 MAKE YOUR OWN

Add some homespun charm to your celebrations - these easy projects will last for years and add the perfect finishing touches to your home

CHRISTMAS BOW WREATH

SUITABLE FOR Beginners
TIME TO MAKE 2 hours

YOU WILL NEED

- Faux green wreath
- Red fake berries
- Dried cinnamon sticks
- Dried oranges
- 1m of 25mm gold-wired ribbon
- 2m of 25mm gold organza ribbon
- Large red bow
- Scissors
- Wire cutters
- Glue gun

HOW TO MAKE

Snip the berry clusters off the garland.

Cluster three cinnamon sticks together and tie with gold ribbon.

Arrange your embellishments around the wreath, wherever you would like them to go. Use a glue gun to secure them in place. The red berries can just be pushed into the wreath foliage, no glue necessary.

At the top of the wreath, tie on some gold ribbon for hanging. Place the large red bow in the top centre of the wreath and secure it, with the wire, in place.

● **TOP TIP!**
CUT THE RIBBON EDGES AT AN ANGLE TO AVOID FRAYING.

CUSTOMISED ADVENT CALENDAR

SUITABLE FOR Intermediates
TIME TO MAKE 4-5 hours

YOU WILL NEED

- Wooden advent calendar present stack
- Acrylic paint in red, green and gold
- 6x6in decorative paper pack
- White/red wooden numbers
- Glitter red ribbon reel
- Green stitch ribbon reel
- Selection of self-adhesive ribbons
- PVA Glue

Fill each door with a treat, surprise or even a funny joke!

HOW TO MAKE

Disassemble the stack to make decoration easier.

Then paint the layers in separate colours and leave to dry.

Decorate the individual boxes with a strip of ribbon, papers, paper hearts

and numbers.

Using individual loops of ribbon glued with PVA, assemble a ribbon on the largest box lid and allow to dry.

TASSEL MONOGRAMMED STOCKING

SUITABLE FOR Beginners
TIME TO MAKE 2 hours

HOW TO MAKE

Lightly sketch your chosen initial and cut it out of the cream felt sheet.

Use this as a template to cut a slightly larger initial from the red felt sheet.

Stick the cream initial on top of the red one and stick onto the stocking using the tacky glue.

Make two tassels in two different colours.

YOU WILL NEED

- Green ready-made stocking
- Cream and red felt sheet
- Selection of yarn
- Glitter red ribbon reel
- Bells
- Tacky glue

Use different colours to make each stocking special

Easy ways to accessorise your little black dress

best dressed

Dress, £40
Coat, £80
Clutch, £14
all BHS

Add a finishing touch to a new frock or give an old faithful an update

New ways to create a brand new look

Up the style ante with these quick, easy and affordable solutions.

✓ Add a touch of glamour with a collar. The secret to keeping it stylish is to choose a delicate design so it sits neatly over the top of your dress.

Collar, £30, Topshop



✓ Nothing transforms a neckline more than a statement necklace and this season bigger is definitely better. Diamante accents will add a glamorous touch, especially if you pick a style that finishes just above your bust.

Necklace, £25, jdwilliams.co.uk



✓ Instead of a black or metallic bag, shop for bold colour. Glitter finishes look set to replace sequins this year and are stunning in shades of red and berry.

Clutch, £22, very.co.uk

GOOD BUY!

A lace print dress makes a refreshing change from plain black. One of our favourites is this simple shift from BHS which looks great teamed with a faux fur coat and bold silver clutch.

✓ Good news, ladies! Mid-heels are all over the high street and they are a great option if you will be standing for hours. Look out for quirky embellishments such as pom-poms to give a plain dress a fun and festive look.

Shoes, £22.99, New Look



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